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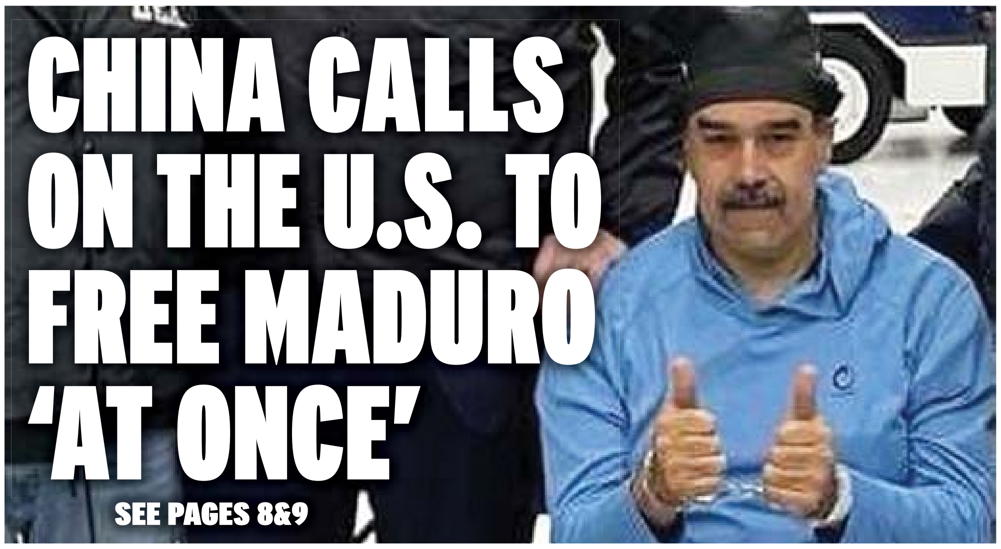

CHINA CALLS ON THE U.S. TO FREE MADURO 'AT ONCE'

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Anger as Prime Minister looks at 'multiple ways' to bring Britain closer to EU

FEARS STARMER IS PLOTTING A 'FULL-BLOWN BREXIT BETRAYAL'

BY **STEPH SPYRO**
Deputy Political Editor

SIR KEIR Starmer has been accused of betraying Brexit by edging closer to the EU single market.

Angry MPs hit out as he insisted Britain should "go further" in strengthening ties with Brussels.

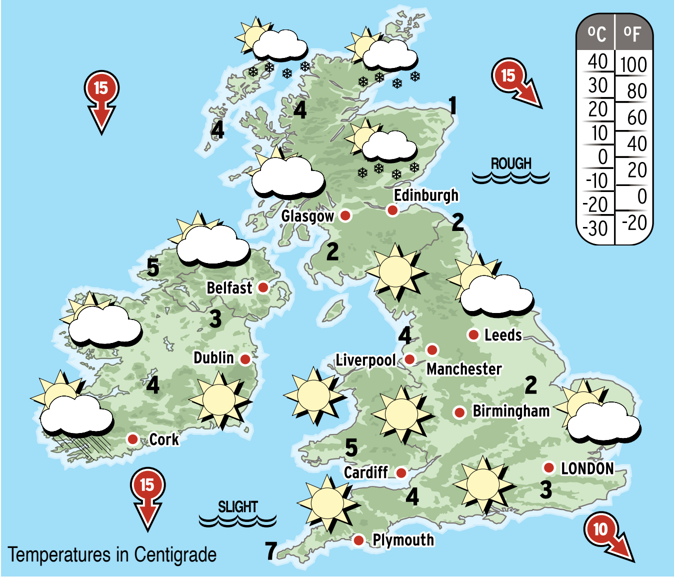
Reform UK's Richard Tice warned: "When the Prime Minister admits that he is looking at 'multiple ways' for Britain to get closer to the EU, Brits will be rightly worried that a full-blown betrayal

TURN TO PAGE 4

Blooming lovely gift for Camilla

SEE PAGE 13

WEATHER FORECAST



Today's summary: Frosty start, bright and clear

North West: A dry day with clear skies and wintry sunshine. Moderate north-westerly winds. Very cold. High 1C (34F).

Northern Ireland: Snowy spells early, clearing to sunny intervals. Gentle winds, turning brisk later. High 3C (37F).

Wales: Cloudy with sunny spells later. Light winds, turning chilly by evening. High 4C (39F).

Midlands: A dry and fine day with plenty of sunshine. Moderate north-westerly winds. Very cold. High 1C (34F).

North East/Yorks: Bright with sunshine and snow showers. Drier later. Light winds. Very cold. High 2C (36F).

Scotland: Sunny spells. Cloudy later. Light winds, turning chilly. High 1C (34F).

East Anglia: Cloudy, sunny breaks later. Brisk winds, cold becoming chilly. High 2C (36F).

London/South East: Dry and fine with lengthy spells of sunshine. Moderate south-westerly winds. Very cold. High 2C (36F).

South: A dry day with clear skies and wintry sunshine. Moderate northerly winds. Very cold. High 2C (36F).

South West: Snow flurries early, turning bright with clear skies. Light winds, becoming slightly brisk. High 5C (41F).

Channel Isles: Wet with mixed precipitation initially. Clearing later. Brisk winds, staying chilly. High 5C (41F).

Sea: North Sea: Moderate. Irish Sea: Moderate. Channel: Moderate.

UK OUTLOOK TOMORROW: Expect chilly conditions with clear skies and light winds. Sunshine likely, with a gradual warming trend through the day.

SIX-DAY FORECAST

Temperatures in Centigrade

	TUE			WED			THU			FRI			SAT			SUN		
		min	max		min	max		min	max		min	max		min	max		min	max
London	⛅	1	4	⛅	2	4	🌧	2	6	🌧	1	6	🌦	3	6	🌦	5	8
Belfast	🌧	1	4	🌧	2	4	🌧	1	5	🌨	0	4	🌧	2	4	🌦	3	5
Birmingham	🌦	0	4	⛅	2	4	🌧	2	5	🌧	1	4	🌦	1	5	🌦	4	6
Cardiff	🌦	2	6	🌦	4	6	🌧	4	7	🌧	2	7	🌦	4	7	🌧	6	8
Glasgow	🌨	0	6	❄	2	4	🌦	1	6	🌨	1	5	❄	2	5	🌧	2	5
Manchester	🌨	-1	4	⛅	2	4	🌧	2	5	🌧	1	5	🌨	2	4	🌧	3	5
Newcastle	🌧	0	4	⛅	0	2	🌦	1	4	🌧	1	3	🌨	1	3	🌧	2	4
Norwich	🌨	1	2	🌨	0	3	🌦	3	4	🌧	1	5	🌨	2	5	🌧	3	6
Plymouth	🌧	5	7	🌧	7	8	🌧	5	9	🌦	5	8	🌧	7	9	🌧	8	10

Britain yesterday

24 hours to 5pm	SUN (hrs)	RAIN (ins)	TEMP (min)	(max)
Aberdeen	2.4	0.02	-2	-1
Aberporth	1.9	0.21	-6	4
Alnwick	5.8	0.00	-1	2
Belfast	0.2	0.11	-1	2
Birmingham	4.3	0.00	-4	3
B'mouth	6.6	0.00	-7	4
Bristol	4.2	0.00	-4	2
Cardiff	2.9	0.01	-1	4
Durham	5.8	0.00	-3	3
Edinburgh	3.6	0.00	-4	1
Glasgow	3.7	0.00	-5	2
Hull	6.5	0.00	-3	2
Ipswich	7.0	0.00	-5	1
Leeds	5.7	0.01	-3	2
Lincoln	5.9	0.00	-3	2
London	6.4	0.00	-4	3
Manchester	2.2	0.05	-8	3
Oxford	6.3	0.00	-4	3
S'hampton	6.7	0.00	-2	5
St Andrews	2.9	0.00	-1	1

Moon, sun and tides

MOON rises: 6.47pm, sets: 9.46am
SUN rises London: 8.05am, sets: 4.07pm
Manchester rises: 8.23am, sets: 4.05pm

Last Quarter
10 January

HIGH TIDE

London B'ge	N/A
Liverpool	N/A
Greenock	N/A
Dover	N/A

Britain Extremes: (24 hours to 11pm Saturday)

Warmest: Isles Of Scilly, 9C (48F)
Coldest: Hurn -6C (21F)
Wettest: Kinlochewe, 0.72in.
Sunniest: Hurn 4.3hrs.

Lighting-up times

Belfast	4.13pm-8.44am
Birmingham	4.09pm-8.16am
Bristol	4.16pm-8.14am
Glasgow	3.59pm-8.45am
London	4.07pm-8.05am
Manchester	4.05pm-8.23am
Newcastle	3.54pm-8.29am

Europe forecast

Today

Amsterdam	Snow	3C/37F
Brussels	Snow	1C/34F
Dublin	Sunny	4C/39F
Frankfurt	Fair	0C/32F
Geneva	Sunny	-1C/30F
Lisbon	Sunny	11C/52F
Madrid	Sunny	7C/45F
Paris	Snow	2C/36F
Rome	Thunder	15C/59F

Tomorrow

Amsterdam	Sleet	3C/37F
Brussels	Fair	2C/36F
Dublin	Rain	5C/41F
Frankfurt	Cloudy	1C/34F
Geneva	Sunny	-1C/30F
Lisbon	Sunny	12C/54F
Madrid	Sunny	7C/45F
Paris	Sunny	3C/37F
Rome	Rain	12C/54F

Around the world yesterday

		C	F			C	F			C	F
Amsterdam	Sleet	2	36	Hong Kong	Sunny	18	64	New York	Fair	-2	28
Athens	Fair	18	64	Istanbul	-	15	59	Nice	Fair	9	48
Barcelona	Drizzle	8	46	Jersey	Rain	5	41	Nicosia	Sunny	16	61
Berlin	Cloudy	-1	30	Larnaca	Sunny	18	64	Perth	Sunny	32	90
Budapest	Sunny	2	36	Las Palmas	Fair	21	70	Prague	Fair	0	32
Cairo	Sunny	16	61	Los Angeles	Shwrs	17	63	Singapore	Cloudy	30	86
Cape Town	Sunny	30	86	Luxor	Sunny	21	70	Stockholm	Snow	-5	23
Casablanca	Thndr	17	63	Malaga	Rain	14	57	Sydney	Fair	29	84
Corfu	Thndr	18	64	Mallorca	Drizzle	9	48	Tel Aviv	Sunny	20	68
Dublin	Fair	0	32	Malta	Fair	19	66	Tenerife	Sunny	21	70
Dubrovnik	Thndr	14	57	Melbourne	Fair	21	70	Toronto	Cloudy	-4	25
Faro	Cloudy	17	63	Miami	Sunny	24	75	Tunis	Cloudy	19	66
Florence	Cloudy	10	50	Moscow	Snow	-3	27	Venice	Sunny	7	45
Gibraltar	Rain	16	61	Nairobi	Fair	25	77	Vienna	Sunny	2	36
Guernsey	Rain	4	39	New Delhi	Sunny	16	61	Warsaw	Fair	-1	30

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Migrants will have to hand in their mobiles

Crackdown on tech begins today

BY **ANAHITA HOSSEIN-POUR**

MOBILE phones and SIM cards will be seized from migrants without needing to arrest them from today to help stop people smugglers.

Officers will begin taking devices at Manston processing centre in Kent with onsite tech available to download data to gather intelligence on gangs.

It is hoped the new powers for law enforcement agencies will hasten probes.

They come after the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Act became law last month.

Border security minister Alex Norris said: "We promised to restore order and control to our borders, which means taking on the people-smuggling networks behind this deadly trade.

"That is why we are implementing robust new laws with powerful offences to intercept, disrupt and dismantle these vile gangs faster than ever and cut off their supply chains. These measures sit alongside sweeping reforms to the system, to make it less attractive for migrants to come here illegally, and to remove and deport people faster."

Small boat smugglers downloading maps face up to five years in jail

Offences

A total of 41,472 migrants arrived in 2025 after crossing the Channel – the second-highest figure on record.

The yearly total was 13% higher than the 2024 figure, when 36,816 migrants came.

And the new law introduces criminal offences, such as up to 14 years in jail, for storing or supplying boat engines to bring migrants via the Channel.

Smugglers downloading maps on where to depart on small boats or researching the best places to buy equipment for the dinghies could get up to five years in prison.

Border Security Commander Martin Hewitt said more than 4,000 disruptions against smuggling gangs have taken place since his unit was set up, such as by seizing cash and convicting ringleaders.

He said today marked a "key moment" with the additional tools.

Splitting poll costing town halls £25m

BY **STEPH SPYRO**

COUNCILS could have saved almost £25million by holding whole-council elections instead of fragmented ones, it has been suggested.

While most local authorities elect all councillors once every four years, others choose elections by thirds or halves – meaning residents are sent to the polls far more often.

But an analysis by the Taxpayers' Alliance suggested these more frequent elections come at a "high and often unjustifiable" cost to local taxpayers.

Stretched

Jonathan Eida, of the TPA, said: "At a time when councils are stretched and cutting vital services, it's extraordinary that millions are still being spent on unnecessarily frequent local elections."

Leeds spent £3.1million on three elections in four years under the system of elections by thirds, which was the highest total in the period.

District councils electing by thirds averaged £455,221 per election cycle, compared with £201,566 for those holding whole elections.

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OPINION **14** SUDOKU **28** TV **37** LETTERS **44** STARS **46** SPORT **50** **PLUS** PUZZLES PULLOUT

World darts champion Luke

Luke Littler blows £150 on pizza after win

BY **JEREMY ARMSTRONG**

MULTI-MILLIONAIRE teen darts sensation Luke Littler has gone all upper crust…celebrating his World Championship win by splashing out £150 on pizza.

The 18-year-old charged to his second crown with a demolition of Gian van Veen, 23, for back-to-back titles.

After his first win, the down-to-earth ace famously celebrated with a kebab.

His 7-1 win means he has become the first man in a decade to win consecutive titles – and a £1million prize. It takes his career prize money overall to just under £4million.

"The Nuke" was joined on stage by beautician girlfriend Faith Millar, 19, who shed tears of joy.

Celebrated

Luke, who lives with his family in a new home in Warrington, Cheshire, said: "I want to dominate everything, I want to try to win everything."

He celebrated into the early hours, only grabbing four hours' sleep.

"I'm very tired. It was a bit busy in the household and I think everyone was a bit excited. My phone was popping off," he said.

"I think we got like 150 quid's worth of pizzas in for everyone."

He said he now plans to treat himself to a trip to Dubai.

Luke added: "For me it was about going back to back. Phil Taylor was world No1 for thousands of days, and I want to beat that record."

Phil "The Power" Taylor has bagged the most titles on 14.

Davina with a new look and Maya

'I'm the Masked Singer star who can't sing!'

Alex: I've shown kids to not be scared of failing

BY **MARK JEFFERIES**

THE ONE Show's Alex Jones hopes her appearance on The Masked Singer, even though she cannot sing, will inspire her kids.

The mum-of-three TV presenter, who performed Pink Pony Club by Chappell Roan dressed as Disc Jockey, was unmasked on Saturday.

She told host Joel Dommett and the judges, Maya Jama, Jonathan Ross, Mo Gilligan and Davina McCall, who had a new hairdo: "I have had a lot of fun. Our family love this show. I want my kids to know that overcoming fear is a good thing. I am not a singer but I gave it a go, and I think that's the take-home for them."

The music is over for Disc Jockey who was revealed as Alex Jones

Alex, 48, said: "They'll think: 'God, our mother, do you remember when she dressed as a disc jockey and she sang on national television without any sort of voice?'.

"This is just pure joy, fun and just completely out of my comfort zone but something I will remember forever. I've never sung in my life – in fact, it was a bit of a phobia. When I was little, I always used to have a cold and they just chucked me out of the choir. From then on, I thought 'that's it, singing is not for me'.

"Learning with the [vocal] coaches has been amazing so there has been a lot of good to take away from it."

Alex faced a vote-off with Gargoyle. Other stars in the competition include Red Panda, Can of Worms, Moth, and Sloth.

Last night, Monkey Business, Tea-Bag, Toastie, Yak, Arctic Fox, and Conkers performed.

Singer Anne-Marie has been unmasked as Goldfish, having performed as the lead singer of a group called No Trout.

ITV said Red Panda had been removed from Saturday's episode due to "potential insensitivities within the theme and lyrics of the song" after dozens of people died in a fire in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, on New Year's Eve.

Images appeared to show the character in sooty hi-vis firefighter overalls and a helmet with a flames and bucket symbol.

It's Prof Green Tea-Bag

BY **MARK JEFFERIES**

Professor Green was left frothing last night after he was unmasked as the voice behind Tea-Bag.

After the show, the rapper, whose real name is Stephen Manderson, said: "I can't believe it. I thought people would have enjoyed Tea-Bag. It was quite scary. My son is going to love it. Although I did show him a photo of the costume with no context and I said 'do you like it' and he said 'no'."

Prof Green unmasked

Green, 42, was pleased that he was not easy to guess for the judges.

He added: "I know four of the panel and none of them were anywhere near. I was laughing behind the mask. I thought surely one is going to get it."

Poll gives Reform a 115-seat majority

BY **STEPH SPYRO**

REFORM UK would storm to a 115-seat majority if a general election was held today, a poll of 16,000 people has suggested.

Nigel Farage's party would pick up 381 MPs – 60% of seats on 31% of the vote – and Labour would slump to 85, down 326 from their 2024 landslide, the More in Common survey found.

Luke Tryl, More in Common UK director, said: "Reform continues to hold pole position. Based on polling since the Budget...Reform could hope to secure a substantial three-figure majority.

"The Greens continue to make gains, with disillusioned progressives putting them within shouting distance of many more gains from Labour.

"While the Tories would lose a further 50 from their 2024 nadir, this projection represents an uptick in the Tories' fortunes.

Rainbow

"The Badenoch bounce may at least be stabilising."

While Zack Polanski's Greens are projected to more than double their Commons presence from four to nine seats, half of the current Lib Dem MPs are tipped to be booted out.

But Mr Tryl added: "Parties of the Left could deny Reform a majority and form a rainbow coalition. The threat of tactical voting, combined with the narrow margin of many of Reform's projected victories, suggests their momentum may have at least temporarily stalled.

"The path to the next general election is still far from known."

Sir Keir Starmer insisted yesterday he would still be PM next year. He acknowledged voters' frustrations but insisted he had a "five-year mandate" to "turn this country around".

Starmer wants to 'bring us back into Brussels' orbit by undoing the Brexit vote'

Sir Keir told Laura Kuennsberg, left, that the UK ought to consider 'even closer alignment' with the EU's single market

FROM PAGE ONE

is being cooked up in the corridors of Whitehall."

Writing in the Daily Express, the party's deputy leader said: "It's no surprise that the man who campaigned not only for Britain to remain in the European Union during the 2016 referendum but subsequently spent years attempting to overturn the democratic vote of 17.4 million people continues on his warpath to bring Britain back into Brussels' orbit now that he has the keys to No 10.

"In fact, Keir Starmer's entire Cabinet is stacked to the brim with dyed-in-the-wool Remainers.

"Many of them strongly advocated for the Brexit vote to be blocked in Parliament. So when the Prime Minister admits that he is looking at 'multiple ways' for Britain to get closer to the EU, Brits will be rightly worried that a full-blown betrayal is being cooked up in the corridors of Whitehall."

Labour's 2024 manifesto promised closer EU ties but "no return to the single market, the customs union or freedom of movement".

The UK last year signed a deal with the EU which includes a security and defence pact, fewer restrictions on British food exporters and visitors, plus a fishing agreement.

Dame Priti Patel, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, accused Sir Keir of "surrendering our freedom". She said: "Labour's Brexit betrayal is becoming clearer by the day.

"In a desperate bid to appease his backbenchers, Keir Starmer is pursuing alignment with the single market – surrendering our freedom to cut regulation and strike our own trade deals.

Benefits

"Only the Conservatives will hold Labour to account for trying to undo the democratic decision of the British people."

Sir Keir poured cold water on suggestions the UK should rejoin a customs union with the bloc after his Health Secretary Wes Streeting claimed that the arrangement had "enormous economic benefits".

Speaking on the BBC's Sunday With Laura Kuenssberg show, the PM pointed to steps taken to align with the EU more closely on agriculture and food, and continued: "That's the sovereign decision that we have taken. I think we should get closer and if it's in our national interest to have even closer alignment with the single market then we should consider that, we should go that far."

Dame Priti Patel hit out at the PM's lastest move

Sir Keir: "I think it's in our national interest to go further.

"What I would say about the customs union is that I argued for a customs union for many years with the EU but a lot of water has now gone under the bridge.

"I do understand why

TV ADMISSION ON EUROPE

EXPRESS VOTE

Is Keir Starmer betraying the Brexit vote by moving closer to the EU?

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COMMENT

RICHARD TICE

Deputy leader of Reform UK

IT'S no surprise that the man who campaigned not only for Britain to remain in the European Union during the 2016 referendum but subsequently spent years attempting to overturn the democratic vote of 17.4 million people, continues on his warpath to bring Britain back into Brussels' orbit now that he has the keys to Number 10.

In fact, Keir Starmer's entire Cabinet is stacked to the brim with dyed-in-the-wool remainers.

Many of them strongly advocated for the Brexit vote to be blocked in Parliament. So when the Prime Minister admits that he is looking at "multiple ways" for Britain to get closer to the EU, Brits will be rightly worried that a full-blown betrayal is being cooked up.

At the weekend, Starmer doubled down on his keenness to see Britain back under the thumb of eurocrats in Brussels, suggesting that Labour could force Britain back into the EU single market, inextricably tying our economy with the failing economic model of Europe.

Let's not forget that simply rejoining the single market means Britain would have to hand over our hard-won sovereignty, accept freedom of movement, and shackle ourselves to the EU's stagnant and over-regulated economy. One of the core four freedoms – as the EU describes it – and a prerequisite of joining the single market is freedom of movement.

Shatter

A return to the single market would not just be a historic betrayal of the 2016 vote, but would also shatter Labour's clear and unambiguous election pledge that, under a Labour government, Britain would never accept freedom of movement.

Yet, Labour's actions are those of a party that has an uncompromising ideological obsession with open borders. Their uncapped proposals for a UK-EU youth mobility scheme could mean that 80 million Europeans would qualify for British visas – rising to a potential 150 million if candidate countries such as Albania join the bloc.

Aside from shattering what little trust the public has left in this government, tying our economy to that of Germany, which is in the throes of a multi-year recession, and France, which has gone through five prime ministers in just two years, would be economic and political suicide.

Let me be clear: if the Prime Minister's ultimate aim is to return us to the failing EU club, Reform UK is ready to hold him to account.

The British people deserve to have their democratic will respected – not undermined.

---

people are saying 'Wouldn't it be better to go to the customs union?'

"I actually think that now we've done deals with the US which are in our national interest, now we've done deals with India which are in our national interest, we are better looking to the single market rather than the customs union for our further alignment."

But the Prime Minister insisted that freedom of movement – a core principle of the EU single market – was off the table as he faced questioning about what concessions he would be willing to offer in return. Asked if he was prepared to allow EU citizens to come to the UK without limits, he replied: "No."

Sir Keir then added: "But we are looking at a youth mobility scheme which will be for young people to travel, to work, to enjoy themselves in different European countries, to have that experience."

He has recently faced pressure from backbenchers to change tack regarding a customs union.

Some 13 Labour MPs backed proposals that would pave the way for such a deal in a Commons vote last month. Downing Street said later in December that the government would adhere to its "red lines" on its EU relationship.

Deputy PM David Lammy also suggested it might be beneficial for the UK to consider re-entering a customs union with the bloc.

Battering

Greater Manchester Mayor and Labour party leadership hopeful Andy Burnham had said earlier that he wanted to see Britain rejoin the EU in his lifetime.

Sir Keir has toughened the government's stance on Brexit ahead of a possible battering for Labour at May's local elections, plus in votes for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats plan to table an amendment to forthcoming legislation that would impose a legal duty on the government to initiate negotiations on a customs union with the EU, in an effort to force a fresh vote on the issue.

Party leader Sir Ed Davey claimed: "Businesses are drowning in red tape and families are paying the price for the appalling Brexit deal left by the Conservatives."

He added: "But so far the Labour government has been far too timid, only tinkering around the edges when it comes to rebuilding our ties with Europe.

"This year, the Prime Minister must finally get a grip on the cost-of-living crisis by negotiating an EU-UK customs union, to boost growth and put money back in people's pockets."

Sir Ed promised: "Liberal Democrats stand ready to work with Labour MPs and others across Parliament to force the government to change course."

OPINION: PAGE 14

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RAF jets blast Isis underground 'weapons base'

BY **MATTHEW DOOLEY**

RAF Typhoons and French military aircraft targeted an underground Isis facility in Syria, the Ministry of Defence has confirmed.

Precision-guided bombs were deployed to strike tunnels leading to the facility, located in mountainous terrain north of the city of Palmyra during Saturday evening's operation.

The compound had most likely been used for stockpiling armaments and explosives, with the surrounding region completely evacuated of civilian populations, the government said.

Typhoon is checked before mission

RAF jets have been conducting surveillance missions across Syria to "prevent any attempted resurgence" of the Islamic State terror group following its crushing defeat at the battle of Baghuz in 2019, the ministry said.

Defence Secretary John Healey says the UK will "stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies" in efforts to "stamp out any resurgence" of the extremist organisation.

He added: "I want to thank all the members of our armed forces involved in this operation.

"They were among thousands of British personnel deployed over Christmas and New Year."

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CHINA TELLS

Moscow 'forcible

BY **GILES SHELDRICK**
Chief Reporter

CHINA and Russia erupted with fury after Donald Trump sanctioned the seizure of Venezuelan despot Nicolas Maduro in a covert coup.

The audacious special forces operation saw the "forcible removal" of the South American dictator and his wife from their Caracas lair as explosions rang out.

They are due to appear in a New York court later today on narco-terrorism charges after being flown out and shipped to the US.

But the daring Delta Force operation angered and humiliated Beijing and Moscow, allies of Venezuela, and set the axis on a collision course with the White House.

The Chinese foreign ministry has demanded US president Donald Trump "release them at once" after Maduro and wife Cilia Flores were captured and flown out to a high-security New York prison.

Beijing's stinging rebuke expressed "serious concern over their transfer out of the country".

It claimed the military operation was "in clear violation of international law and the basic norms in international relations and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter", adding: "China calls on the US to ensure the personal safety of President Maduro and his wife. Release them at once.

NO BLOOD FOR OIL
NEEDS NOT
STOP BOMBING VENEZUELA NOW!
NO U.S. WAR
Protest outside where Maduro is detained

"Stop toppling the government of Venezuela and resolve issues through dialogue and negotiation."

Maduro's capture infuriated China, not least because the last video of the toppled tyrant was of him hosting Beijing's special representative for Latin American affairs, Qiu Xiaoqi, in a post on Instagram.

Moscow, which launched a full invasion of its neighbour Ukraine almost four years ago, accused the US of committing "an act of armed aggression".

The seizure of Maduro marked the first direct US military attack on a South American country.

And afterwards, Mr Trump issued an ominous warning when he said: "American dominance in the western hemisphere will never be questioned again."

Mr Trump alleged Maduro, who had served as president of Venezuela since 2013, was the leader of the Cartel de los Soles [Cartel of the Suns] drug-trafficking operation. He and his wife were captured by US forces on Saturday and smuggled out of Caracas on board a US helicopter and taken to the waiting USS Iwo Jima warship.

He was then taken to New York via Cuba and later pictured in a tracksuit and shackled alongside Drug Enforcement Administration officers.

Iran, which was targeted by US bombers last year in raids aimed at destroying its nuclear capabilities, described Saturday's operation as a "flagrant violation of the country's national sovereignty". Colombia,

COMMENT

MARK ALMOND
Director of Crisis Research Institute, Oxford

A FEW days into 2026, Donald Trump has upturned expectations of how the world is run. Enemies and allies alike have been taught a bitter lesson by the US seizure of President Nicolas Maduro.

Other world leaders have to take Donald Trump's criticisms of them very seriously.

Only the US military and intelligence community have the skills, resources and, above all, the personnel capable of such a bold and decisive act.

Things could have gone wrong. Helicopters are vulnerable to ground fire, so probably someone sold out Maduro.

It will have tyrants everywhere eyeing their cronies more suspiciously than ever.

Escalation

Ritual condemnations of Trump's coup have come from Latin America's Left-wing, but elected, presidents in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

For them, however, the question is whether Trump's Washington will tolerate their moralising if their countries' narco-mafias carry on smuggling vast quantities of drugs into the US.

Gustavo Petro, president of cocaine-producing Colombia, was directly threatened by Trump, who warned him to "watch his ass".

Trump threatens escalation if the surviving Venezuelan regime doesn't co-operate. US rivals would welcome drawing it into a guerrilla quagmire in Latin America.

But friends and foes are racing to recalibrate their policies in the light of Trump's clear warning to everyone: defying him is expensive and few can afford the price.

TRUMP TO RELEASE VENEZUELA PRESIDENT 'AT ONCE'

and Beijing's fury at removal' of Maduro

Nicolas Maduro gestures as he arrives in New York. Right, Donald Trump watches capture with CIA director John Ratcliffe. Inset, despot's wife Cilia Flores in captivity and US officers at NYC detention centre

A residential block in Catia La Mar was among homes hit during the US operation

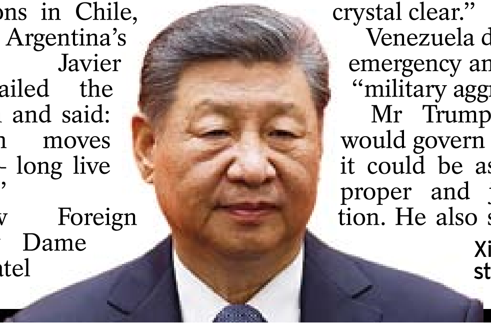
Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico and Cuba joined the chorus of criticism.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply concerned that the rules of international law have not been respected" and was "deeply alarmed" by an operation that sets a "dangerous precedent".

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said no tears would be shed over the end of Maduro's regime and added: "The UK government will discuss the evolving situation with US counterparts as we seek a safe and peaceful transition to a legitimate government that reflects the will of the Venezuelan people."

News of Maduro's capture, watched by Mr Trump at his Mar-a-Lago resort, prompted celebrations in Chile, while Argentina's president Javier Milei hailed the operation and said: "Freedom moves forward – long live freedom."

Shadow Foreign Secretary Dame Priti Patel said: "The national security strategy, that America under Trump was going to assert itself when it came to wrongdoing having a big impact on the United States, was crystal clear."



Xi Jinping told US to stop the 'toppling'

Venezuela declared a state of emergency and denounced US "military aggression".

Mr Trump said the US would govern the country until it could be assured of a safe, proper and judicious transition. He also said US oil firms would take over Venezuela's wells, with the profits given to the nation's people.

He dismissed the chances of opposition leader Maria Corina Machado taking over.

But US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday appeared to contradict his president, saying the US would not govern Caracas but press for changes through an oil blockade.

It came as Delcy Rodriguez, Mr Maduro's vice-president, was officially sworn in as interim leader and backed by the country's military. She demanded the US free Maduro and called him the rightful leader. But last night Mr Trump warned Ms Rodriguez may pay a bigger price than the ousted leader "if she doesn't do what's right".

"If she doesn't do what's right, she is going to pay a very big price, probably bigger than Maduro."

Ruling out elections, Mr Rubio said: "I do know this: that if they don't make the right decision, the United States will retain multiple levers of leverage."

Congress was not briefed on the top-secret military operation due to concerns it could be leaked.

Marine life now under threat in ‘surrender’ of Chagos isles

BY **STEPH SPYRO**

HANDING the Chagos Islands to Mauritius threatens one of the world’s most precious natural environments, says a think tank.

The Chagos Marine Protected Area is home to almost 800 fish species, at least 300 corals, 280 types of plants and 50 species of birds. Some are unique to the area and 76 are at risk of extinction.

A Policy Exchange report today claims it is “highly unlikely” that Mauritius – off east Africa – will safeguard the Chagos’ natural environment. Prof Richard Ekins, head of the think tank’s Judicial Power Project, said: “There are many reasons to oppose the surrender of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius – especially on the terms the government negotiated.

“The treaty imposes no meaningful obligation on Mauritius to protect the environment and the UK has no leverage if Mauritius acts badly.

“Parliament cannot responsibly authorise ratification of the treaty under these circumstances.”

Under Mauritian plans, Chagos waters may be opened up to fishing, which is currently banned.

Report author Dr Yuan Yi Zhu said MPs must “ensure that Mauritius will safeguard the natural environment”. A deal returning sovereignty was signed in May. The UK will lease back the Diego Garcia military base at a cost of £120million annually.

Talks were initiated after the International Court of Justice said the UK should cede control.

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EXCLUSIVE

BY **MATT CLEMENSON**

THE next 12 months will be “make or break” for the UK as our armed forces face an arms race to keep Russian aggression at bay, security experts have warned.

Fears of a Russian-sparked global conflict could even see 2026 become the year mass conscription becomes a reality for thousands of Britons as the Army faces its biggest crisis in a century on the continent.

Professor Anthony Glees, a security expert from the University of Buckingham, told the Express that the UK should go much further than the “gap year” military service programme announced by the Ministry of Defence last week.

He said it must “prepare for war with Putin’s Russia sooner rather than later”.

The Russian president launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, before European allies were able to shore up Kyiv’s armed forces.

By the end of last year Russian forces were once again advancing to claim Ukrainian territory as US support for the war-torn country wavered amid ongoing peace talks championed by Donald Trump.

Russian “shadow fleet” vessels regularly approach UK waters, while an increase in “grey zone” cyber attacks and confrontations with Russian planes in the air have become more frequent.

Prof Glees said: “We need to ensure we are fighting fit for what 2026 is likely to throw at us.

Insufficient

“We need to spend vast amounts on building up a peace arsenal that Putin will find daunting.

“This includes introducing a form of conscription that goes way beyond the ‘gap year’ military training scheme that Defence Secretary John Healey has trumpeted so loudly.

“The starting offer of 150 ‘recruits’ rising to 1,000 at some point in the future is simply insufficient.

“We need to demonstrate to Putin and his chums Xi Jinping and Kim Jong Un that our armed forces are not a fuddy-duddy Gilbert and Sullivan cast but a modern, desperately serious warfighting community.

“We know the UK has more traffic enforcement officers (82,000) than members of the armed forces (around 74,000). It is a horrifying statistic, given that the next European war will start as a conventional war, using conventional forces and weapons as did the Russian invasion of Ukraine almost four years ago.

“The Germans have introduced conscription and we should follow their strong example.”

Last month, the UK’s Chief of Defence Staff, Sir Richard Knighton, insisted there were no plans to bring back mandatory service.

However, he stopped short of ruling out the move entirely.

He said: “I cannot see conscription returning in the short term. But the situation in the world may deteriorate very significantly.

“I have every confidence in the fighting spirit of the nation. Whenever this nation has been asked, it stood up.” The Ministry of Defence insists it has no plans to introduce conscription, and is focusing instead on providing better training and equipment for “those who choose to serve”.

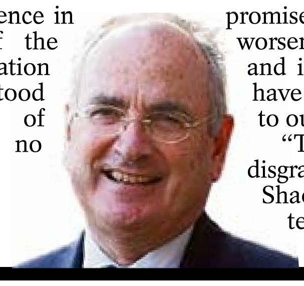
Senior members of the Conservative Party criticised PM Keir Starmer for presiding over cuts of nearly £3billion to the MoD’s budget.

Former defence secretary Sir Liam Fox gave a damning assessment of Labour’s leadership on defence.

He said: “It is clear that not only has this Labour government not followed through in its meagre promises on defence but by worsening the public finances and increasing our debt they have left us more vulnerable to our enemies in the future.

“They are a national disgrace.”

Shadow armed forces minister Mark Francois added:


Prof Glees has called for some form of conscription

COMMENT

TOBIAS ELLWOOD

Former Defence Minister

THE warnings now come weekly. From intelligence chiefs to Nato commanders, the message is consistent: the probability of war with a China-backed Russia is rising. The increasing drumbeat of cyber attacks, the snaring of undersea cables and disinformation campaigns are changing the threat environment faster than our ability to respond.

Yet our complacency is shocking. Yes, defence spending targets are rising across Nato but they do not meaningfully bite until the mid-2030s. Meanwhile, the world continues to fracture.

The West? Divided. America? Unpredictable. The assumptions that underpinned our security for decades no longer hold.

Are we ready? No. We are woefully under-prepared. We still imagine conflict as something conventional, fought overseas by professional forces. That world has gone. War has already arrived. It targets our economy, our infrastructure, our data, our cohesion and our confidence.

The government’s proposed military “gap year” is welcome but will hardly make Moscow quiver.

It has helped trigger a national conversation about what is coming. Across Europe, countries are confronting the same reality and reintroducing national service. So should we.

Conflict has changed far beyond simply bolstering naval, land and air power. Cyber security, AI, drone operations, air-traffic resilience, civil defence and protection of undersea infrastructure are now critical skills.

This is about national resilience in the grey zone between peace and war where our adversaries already operate. An eight-month programme for 18-year-olds, followed by annual refreshers would quickly embed resilience in every corner of the country.

It would also strengthen social cohesion and bind a fractured nation – 2026 must be the year we stop pretending.

SECURITY EXPERT'S MASS CONSCRIPTION WARNING

'We need to show Putin and all his chums our armed forces are not a fuddy-duddy Gilbert and Sullivan cast'

Vulnerable Britain now has fewer troops than traffic enforcement officers

"While we don't currently support mandatory conscription – other than in wartime – we do believe there are other ways of improving our military readiness.

"For instance, despite all the experience from Ukraine, the British Army still does not have a single active drone regiment.

"We should rapidly establish several 'drone ranger' units, specialised in this rapidly expanding form of warfare.

"While Labour's 'gap year' idea might help a bit, it is really the old Army short service limited commission rebranded.

"If Labour are really serious about improving our military readiness they could start by abandoning their £2.6billion of in-year cuts to the MoD's operating budget, which is a gift to our opponents by materially reducing our training to fight. It makes no sense at all."

The Army is 'dangerously' underfunded, say critics

Reform MP Danny Kruger also accused Labour of "dangerously underfunding" the Army.

He said: "Labour clearly consider defence an irritating distraction rather than a national priority, offering little beyond warm words while failing to tackle the deep-rooted rot created within our armed forces by decades of neglect under both Tory and Labour governments.

"Only days ago, Keir Starmer's flagship pledge to raise defence spending was proven to be little more than bluster, with the government facing a £800bn black hole by 2040.

"Botched procurement and a bloated bureaucracy stuffed with diversity officers have hollowed out our military, leaving it dangerously underfunded. Only Reform UK will slash waste, reform procurement and make our armed forces a priority once more."

One thing many pundits agree on is that the number of armed personnel the UK can call upon needs to increase – and fast.

Decline

There are just 74,400 trained soldiers, down from more than 80,000 in 2022. Defence Secretary Healey vowed last June to "reverse the decline" and raise trained soldier numbers to 76,000 during the next Parliament.

He may not find that an easy task to manage. Since 2010, the British Army has beaten its annual recruitment target for soldiers only once.

This century, it has topped it just three times – post-pandemic, in the wake of 9/11 and following the financial crash of 2008.

In August, polling for the Express revealed that 64% of Britons were not willing to join the armed forces in the event of war, with a further 6% saying they were unsure.

The MoD said: "This government has no plans to introduce conscription and believe the best way of defending our country is by maintaining professional Armed Forces who choose to serve.

"We are reversing the long-term decline in the size of the Army and will increase defence spending to 2.5% by 2027.

"And we are providing better training, smarter use of capabilities and harnessing technological advancements so our armed forces operate precisely, at scale and at speed."

OPINION: PAGE 14

Family pain over hero as seaside victims named

Sarah Keeling and daughter Grace, 15, were swept away

Mother, 45, and her teenage daughter among three dead

BY **LUCY THORNTON**

THE family of a man who drowned trying to save a mum and daughter in a triple tragedy said many lives have been shattered by his death.

Police yesterday named Mark Ratcliffe, 67, and Grace, 15, and Sarah Keeling, 45, who were swept out to sea as 12ft waves struck a promenade in Withernsea, East Yorks, on Friday.

Paying tribute, Mark's family said: "A true selfless hero with a heart of gold, who was so cruelly taken trying to save others. So many lives are now shattered that you're gone. You were loved by so many people, and we will all miss you for ever."

Police said the bodies of Sarah and Mark were recovered on Friday night and searches are continuing to find Grace. Both families are being supported by specially trained officers.

Drowning

Grace is believed to have been caught by a giant wave after going down concrete steps leading to the beach. Just 30 seconds earlier she had been wave watching with her mum from the top of the steps.

But Sarah, who was with their dog on a lead, had just stepped away. She then ran back after hearing her daughter cry out and passers-by raise the alarm.

By the time she got back to the steps Grace had been swept almost 100 yards further down the beach. Witnesses said she still could be seen on the shoreline. Sarah waded in and is said to have got inches away from her daughter but also ended up drowning.

Sarah was later found by coastguard crews in a crevice 100 yards away.

Mark's son Nigel said he was proud of the brave grandfather and thanked emergency crews for trying to save him.

Hero Mark Ratcliffe died trying to save a mother and daughter from the waves

He wrote: "Bye Dad I miss you and I will never forget the true hero and role model you were. I will continue to make you proud. Love You Forever, Nige."

He added: "Our thoughts go out to the other lives and families affected in this awful tragedy." Rescuers found Mark's body at 10pm on Friday and came agonisingly close to reaching Grace. A lifeboat crew in an orange rib dived into the sea despite 3metre waves after spotting the teenager.

But they were unable to reach Grace before she was swept further away in the terrible conditions.

Flowers were left at the scene after a major rescue operation was launched.

More than 100 people have taken part in the search involving the RNLI, coastguard, police and helicopters.

Paul Whitehead, 60, the owner of Castle Cafe on the promenade, has shown his CCTV footage to police.

He said Sarah and a member of staff were up to their knees in the water when trying to reach Grace but the mother was also swept away.

Paul added: "The mum's actions were instinctive. I'm a dad and you would not hesitate. It's a tragic accident."

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SARA DAVIES ON NEW QUIZ SHOW

'Over the last five years I've learned I love doing TV'

BY **NICOLA METHVEN**

ON Dragons' Den, with thousands of pounds at stake, Sara Davies is always cool as a cucumber, with a friendly smile and encouraging words for the wannabes.

So when the producers of new ITV daytime quiz Time is Money needed a host, they knew she would be the perfect choice.

Sara, 41, said she did not need to be asked twice.

"It's not like presenting a quiz was on my big life agenda, but what I've learned about myself over the last five years or so is that I just love doing TV," she laughed. "And I like doing TV with other people because I think I've got quite a lot of natural warmth and empathy.

"So when they came to me and said, 'ITV would really love you to work on this quiz with us,' I was like, 'Wow, that came out of the left field'.

"Normally, when you're launching a new quiz, you would want to go with a presenter who's a tried and tested professional at these sort of things. So I felt so humbled and honoured they were prepared to take a chance on me.

"That's a big risk for them, which just drove me even more because I don't do anything half-heartedly. If I'm in something, I'm really in it."

But bosses felt Sara's friendly personality would help to put the contestants at ease.

Relaxed

"I realised quite early on that if I could make them feel relaxed then they enjoy the process more," she said. "I tried to forge a genuine connection really quickly with all of the players and I felt like I was rooting for them."

While she needed to ask the questions "quite straight", she was still willing them on from across the studio.

She is down-to-earth enough to know that the show is about the contestants rather than her.

"I guess I came into it wanting to be what the quiz needed me to be," she said. "They wanted my personality, but it wasn't about me. It was about delivering the show really well.

"I'm hoping when people watch it, they realise that I feel really natural with this and I love doing it."

ITV is adding to its daytime quiz haul of The Chase, Tipping Point, Deal or No Deal and Lingo with the new series, which will air daily from 3pm today.

The twist is that the contestants begin with their prize money – and must beat the clock to keep it. If they fail to answer correctly, they can only watch as their cash prize slips away… meaning they can go from hero to zero – and vice-versa – in the blink of an eye.

So how did Sara, who has sons Oliver, 12, and nine-year-old Charlie with husband Simon, cram it into her packed schedule? Well, she used the same tactic she employed when competing in Strictly Come Dancing in 2021.

"I learned to de-compartmentalise when I did Strictly," she revealed.

"When I did Strictly, I could only rehearse for six hours a day from 6am to midday. I learned that I had to give them all of me in those six hours, and I couldn't be doing other things, I couldn't be physically present in body and not be present in mind.

"I can't give any one thing in my life as much time as I'd like to give it, because I just try to cram too much in. So what I do is I give 100% of me in the moment. So that's what I did here. I had to take eight days out of my schedule to film that quiz show, but in that time they got all of me.

"That's how I can make something successful."

Of course the role came with some challenges, not least her distinctive north-east accent.

"It can be quite challenging when it comes to pronouncing Shakespearean characters and European footballers," she added. "I'd spend hours practising."

● *Time is Money, ITV/ITVX, weekdays at 3pm.*

'I give 100% of me in the moment, that's how I can make something successful'

Sara on new quiz show and, below from left, with Aljaz on Strictly, husband Simon and Dragons' Den

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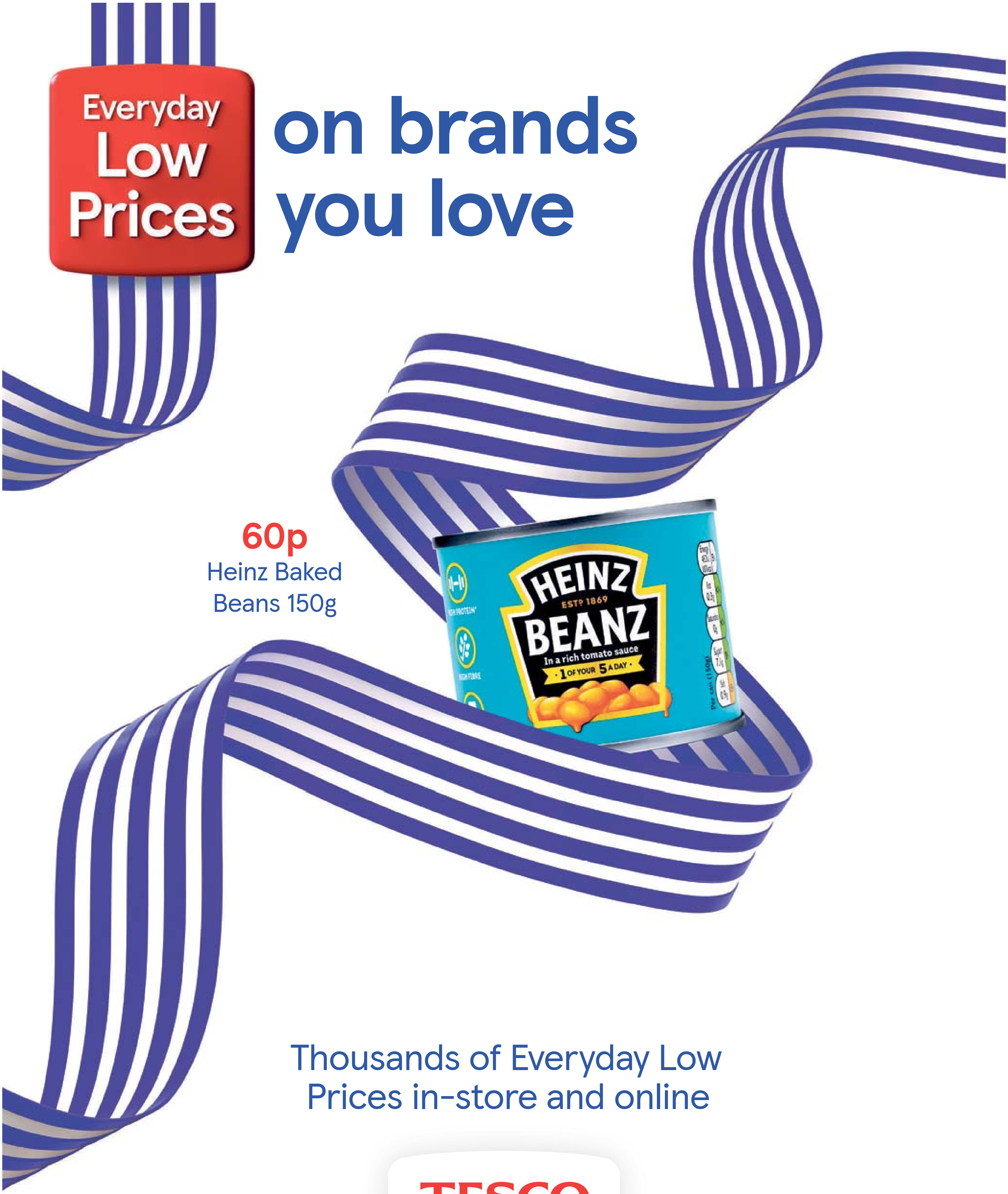
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Charles and Camilla brave the freeze for first outing of 2026

BY **HANISHA SETHI**

KING Charles and Queen Camilla wrapped up warm as they attended church as temperatures dropped to -1C at Sandringham.

The outing was their first together since they went to St Mary Magdalene for the Christmas service in Norfolk.

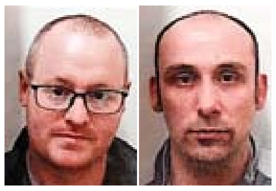
Yesterday, as the winter sun streamed down, Charles, 77, wore a thick brown coat, while Camilla, 78, wore a cream coat with a brown hat and fur trim, and a patterned scarf. She held a small bunch of flowers given to her by a royal fan.

Meanwhile, the King has paid tribute to Anne Frank's step-sister and Auschwitz survivor Eva Schloss, who has died aged 96.

Eva was the co-founder and honorary president of the Anne Frank Trust, whose patron is Queen Camilla.

The trust educates young people about prejudice using lessons from the Holocaust, which killed Anne after the teen diarist was found by Nazis.

The King said: "My wife and I are greatly saddened to hear of the death of Eva Schloss. We are privileged and proud to have known her and admired her deeply."



Armstrong and Washbourne

Brick killer on run from jail with pal

BY **FILIPA GASPAR**

AN INMATE who beat a grandfather to death with a brick is on the run after escaping jail on New Year's Day with two other prisoners.

Police are still searching for convicted murderer Matthew Armstrong, 35, and violent offender Daniel Washbourne after they fled HMP Leyhill in South Gloucestershire.

Armstrong got life in 2009 for murdering Paul Smith, 54, in Rugby, Warks, with a brick before robbing him.

Washbourne, 40, has convictions for violence against a person and false imprisonment.

Police said: "Members of the public who see the two men should not approach them. If you see either call 999."

The third escapee, Aaron Thomas, has been arrested and charged.

Waist-to-height ratio shows health risk better than BMI

BY **STORM NEWTON**

MEASURING someone's waist-to-height ratio is a much better indicator of health risks associated with carrying excess fat than the body mass index – particularly in older people, according to research.

BMI does not indicate where fat is stored and as people lose muscle with age, their body fat percentage may rise despite the scales showing the pounds coming off, experts said.

Using a tape measure to assess the waist-to-height ratio may help pinpoint those who have more fat stored around their vital organs which puts their health at risk, they suggest.

BMI is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by height in metres squared, while the waist-to-height ratio divides waist circumference by height.

According to researchers, if the circumference of the waist is less than half a person's height, it is "a good indicator" that they are at a healthy weight.

While someone's BMI may decline in old age due to muscle loss, the waist-to-height ratio may continue to increase steadily, providing a more accurate reflection of the risk of conditions such as heart disease and stroke.

Tale of the tape could be vital

Dr Laura Gray, of Sheffield University's school of medicine and population health, said: "BMI doesn't account for any muscle in your body. Weight could be fat weight or muscle weight and it doesn't distinguish between the two. That's problematic. Quite often we'll hear athletes have a BMI over 30 and would be classed as living with obesity, but we know that they're not. They don't have excess weight.

"This study is the other side of that coin. Older people tend to lose muscle when they age. That means their body fat percentage is actually higher but their weight is still dropped, so BMI starts coming down. But actually they're getting less healthy. Waist-to-height ratio, because it measures round your waist, it's giving us a more accurate measurement of visceral fat."

Visceral fat – stored around the vital organs – has "more of an effect on how things work within your body", according to Dr Gray.

The study, published in the International Journal of Obesity and led by researchers at the universities of Sheffield and Nottingham, analysed obesity trends between 2005 and 2021 using data from the Health Survey for England.

Burden

Dr Gray added: "If we underdiagnose obesity in older adults because we're relying on BMI, then this could mean we fail to identify large proportions of people who are at high risk and can benefit from interventions. People are more likely to have obesity the older they get and that has been the case for some time.

"As we have an ageing population, there is going to be a lot more older people as a proportion of our society – and that's going to put a greater burden on the NHS."

HOW TO LOSE WEIGHT: PAGES 26&27

JUNK FOOD AD BAN GETS UNDER WAY

BY **JOSIE CLARKE**

A CRACKDOWN on advertising unhealthy food comes into full effect today in an attempt to tackle childhood obesity.

The ban prevents ads for "less healthy" food and drink high in fat, salt and sugar appearing on television between 5.30am and 9pm, and online at any time.

It follows a voluntary ban by advertisers that began on October 1, and means they must now comply with the new rules or risk action by the Advertising Standards Authority.

The ban applies to products that fall within 13 categories considered to play the most significant role in childhood obesity. These include soft drinks, chocolates, sweets, pizzas and ice cream, as well as breakfast cereals and sweetened bread products.

The government estimates the move will prevent around 20,000 cases of childhood obesity.

Katherine Brown, professor of behaviour change in health at the University of Hertfordshire, said: "A watershed ban on TV before 9pm and a complete online ban aimed at reducing children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing is long overdue and a move in the right direction.

"Children are highly susceptible to aggressive marketing of unhealthy foods, and exposure to them puts them at greater risk of developing obesity and associated diseases."

DAILY EXPRESS

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Sly Starmer stepping up betrayal of Brexit voters

IT SHOULD come as a surprise to no one that our cowardly Prime Minister has given the clearest sign yet that Labour wants to strengthen Britain's relationship with Brussels.

And it now looks almost certain that closer ties with Europe will come in the form of a reworked single market.

Sir Keir Starmer has slowly sold out everyone whose interests he promised to champion.

This is the latest in a long line of betrayals and it is why no one should pay the slightest notice when he claims there will be no return to freedom of movement as part of any deal.

Pushed specifically on "even closer alignment", Sir Keir said: "If it's in our national interest…then we should consider that, we should go that far."

Make no mistake, the reset of the relationship power-hungry Labour wants with the bloc is more like a renewal of marriage vows.

Under this government Britain has been drifting back into the arms of Brussels with each passing week.

It is an affront to each and every one of the 17.4 million who voted for Brexit.

Sir Keir has zero credibility if he says he rules out freedom of movement yet endorses a travel scheme that would allow youngsters to live and work in the UK. It is the very definition.

A so-called youth mobility scheme would allow British and European 18-to-30-year-olds to travel freely. And then what?

Britain voted to unshackle itself from the Brussels straitjacket, but in order to seize the benefits we need a leader with strength, clarity and vision – not a feeble flip-flopper who has always dreamed of overturning the result of a democratic vote.

Time to rally the troops

BRITAIN is now facing unprecedented threats from all points of the compass so, with a threadbare Armed Forces, how long before conscription?

We can no longer afford to overlook the urgent need to bolster national security in the face of intensifying global conflicts. The brutal reality is we are simply not prepared to either mount or respond to a war.

The numbers serving have been whittled down to historically low numbers not seen since the mid-19th century – around two-thirds less than the standing troop numbers before the First or Second World Wars, at just 74,000.

At the time of the Falklands War in 1982 numbers were closer to 350,000.

It will hurt many to accept but the Army, Navy and Air Force – still the very best in the world – are shadows of what they once were.

With aggressive adversaries such as Russia continuing its bloodthirsty rampage in Ukraine, while sabre-rattling across mainland Europe, we need to bolster both combat-ready troops and reservists.

Great toast of the coast

THE demise of the great British boozer – around eight each week are calling time – is a sad sign of the times.

But there is hope.

Let's raise a glass to Great Yarmouth, the seaside resort in Norfolk which is bucking the trend with more pubs per person than any other UK town.

We'll certainly drink to that!

Council still piling on misery after city's rubbish year

Labour's inability to end the waste collection stalemate has angered local voters

Duncan Barkes

Guest columnist

IS Britain broken and can it be saved? Not if the ongoing scandal in Birmingham is anything to go by. This week sees the first anniversary of industrial action by refuse collectors in the city.

Aside from being utterly farcical, it shows how a local council controlled by Labour since 2012 and a Labour government have been unable to solve a crisis that affects more than a million people who fork out vast sums of cash to pay ever-increasing council tax bills.

Residents must be wondering what they are getting for their money as the sight of bin-bags became an omnipresent feature on their streets throughout 2025. The crisis began as Birmingham City Council grappled with financial insolvency and attempted to restructure its services, including waste collection.

Union Unite predictably went into bat for its members and when talks over job roles and pay broke down, January 2025 saw waste collection services disrupted by work to rule and intermittent industrial action.

Proposed council restructuring would see the role of Waste Recycling and Collection Officer abolished which, the union said, would result in pay cuts of up to £8,000 for around 170 workers.

TELLING someone they are going to lose £8,000 of their salary is never going to end well, even if it is from a council that has shown it is financially incompetent. As negotiations went nowhere, March saw an all-out strike and the council was forced to declare the situation a Major Incident, due to growing fears of rodents and public health.

Images of rotting rubbish and reports of rat infestations made the national headlines with politicians and commentators observing how a once-great city looked like it was in decay. At one point, the council was forced to secure an interim High Court injunction to stop the obstruction of refuse vehicles and to ensure that depots could remain open and in operation. A giant rat was spotted in attendance at a full council meeting but it turned out to be a man in a costume protesting at the ongoing farce.

Laughably, as rubbish remained piled on streets, Councillor Majid Mahmood, Birmingham's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport – the man responsible for waste collection in the city – insisted he did not think the reputation of Birmingham had taken "a hit" due to the strikes.

Clearly, he lives in a parallel universe compared to the rest of us. Aside from the reputational damage to Birmingham and a situation that has left residents in despair, one of the glaring omissions of the past 12 months has been the lack of resignations as a result of not ending this crisis.

If failure to solve a year-long industrial dispute was impacting on the delivery of services to customers of a private business, then heads would have rolled by now and rightly so.

Aside from the lack of decent accountability, a recent report from the finance director of the city council revealed that the strikes had cost it £14million so far. This figure is made up of costs of street cleaning, extended tip opening times and using companies to help reduce the refuse backlog.

We must remember, this is not council money but the cash of hardworking local taxpayers that is being used to pick up the tab as the council and Unite remain at loggerheads.

Having entered a new year, this stalemate shows no signs of ending. The council remains adamant its planned changes to the waste service – which were the trigger for these strikes – will still go ahead in June.

For residents, this means household rubbish being collected fortnightly and the reintroduction of recycling services.

UNITE say they are fully prepared to continue their strike well into 2026 with a third "megapicket" planned later this month.

The past year has shown all involved in the worst possible light, with the people of the once-great city of Birmingham bearing the brunt of poor leadership and ego – both in the council and the union.

In the case of the councillors that make up the city council, the day of reckoning is imminent.

With upcoming council elections currently scheduled for May 7, local voters will be able to have their say at the ballot box as all 101 council seats are up for grabs.

The Labour leadership of the council should be petrified of the results as I suspect the people of Birmingham will send them a clear message about their handling of the bin strikes as they unbelievably enter a second year.

'Birmingham residents are in despair over this refuse crisis'

JJ Anisiobi

THIS IS HOW I SEE IT

A&E is not some clinic for people with a headache

THE latest NHS figures should make every sane person in this country wince. Over the past five years, A&E departments have been steadily clogged up by people turning up with complaints that would once have earned you a stern look, a cup of tea and a lie down.

We are talking hiccups, coughs, headaches, backaches and vague abdominal pains – the kind of ailments generations before us simply got on with.

Let's be clear. A&E is for accidents and emergencies. Heart attacks. Strokes. Serious injuries. Life or death moments.

It is not a walk-in reassurance clinic for people who have lost the ability to cope with some form of mild discomfort.

Of course, nobody is saying that if you genuinely need A&E you shouldn't go. If you're in real distress, get help immediately.

But we now appear to be living in a country where too many people panic at the first sign of discomfort and sprint straight to hospital, convinced their sniffle is a death sentence.

Whatever happened to the British stiff upper lip? Whatever happened to common sense?

We even have alternative services designed precisely for this reason. NHS 111 exists to give advice, reassurance and direction for non-emergency health concerns. It is there to filter, to guide, and to stop A&E being overwhelmed.

Instead, people bypass it entirely, marching straight through hospital doors and adding to queues that already stretch for hours.

The result? Ambulances stacked outside hospitals, exhausted doctors and nurses burning out, and genuinely ill patients left waiting longer than they should. That isn't just inconvenient, it's dangerous.

Do we need to start naming and shaming serial abusers of the system? Perhaps not publicly, but there must be deterrents. At the very least, there needs to be a cultural reset. The NHS is a precious, finite resource, not an emotional support blanket.

If we don't relearn the difference between a minor ailment and a true emergency, we will continue to sabotage the very service we claim to worship.

Police plan rooted in common sense

POLICING in Britain has suffered from the same flaw that plagues so many public services: scarce resources spread thinly in the name of fairness, while accepting failure everywhere. That's why Tory plans for "hotspot policing" acknowledge a truth – crime is not evenly distributed, and pretending otherwise costs lives.

Anyone who lives in or works in our cities knows this instinctively. A handful of streets, estates and neighbourhoods are blighted by violence, robbery and antisocial behaviour, while vast swathes of the country experience comparatively little serious crime. In London, just 4% of neighbourhoods account for more than a quarter of all knife crime.

That isn't a stereotype, it's a statistic. Hotspot policing is refreshingly blunt. Instead of abstract promises about "community engagement", it puts officers where crime actually happens, at the times it's most likely to happen.

Two officers, assigned to a specific hotspot, patrolling during the 40 highest-risk hours every week, all year round. That is not over-policing – it's intelligent policing. Critics will wail about fairness, stigma and civil liberties, as they always do. But what about fairness for law-abiding residents trapped in these areas?

WHAT about the liberty of shopkeepers repeatedly robbed, families terrified, and children growing up thinking violence is normal? For too long, the loudest voices in the debate have been those least affected by inaction. And I am one of the people who grew up in such a neighbourhood. Parts of town were dangerous and we avoided them like the plague. Even a simple journey home from school was a chicken-run of dodging anti-social behaviour and attacks from kids. I would have loved to have had police patrolling my streets.

The evidence is there. The Home Office's Grip programme delivered tens of thousands of patrols, removed 85,000 weapons and cut violence and robbery by 7% in targeted hotspots. At a time when police numbers are stretched, such smarter deployment is essential.

Backed by technology, hotspot policing signals a shift back to visible law enforcement. Add more officers and a focus on serious crime, and you have policing rooted in common sense.

If we genuinely want to bring crime down, we must stop tiptoeing around the problem.

Picture: PAUL GILHAM/GETTY

Wolfson's Roman role must now end

KEMI Badenoch has spent months talking tough about standards, seriousness and restoring trust in politics. Now she has a simple test of whether she actually means it.

Her shadow attorney general Lord Wolfson, *below*, cannot continue in post while representing Roman Abramovich, *left*, the billionaire former Chelsea owner and Russian oligarch sanctioned by the government. This isn't about legal technicalities or the tired defence that "everyone deserves representation". Of course they do.

But not everyone gets to do that work while simultaneously holding one of the most sensitive legal roles in a party of government. You cannot sit at the top table, shaping Britain's approach to the rule of law, while acting for a man the British state has explicitly sanctioned over links to the Kremlin.

It is a grotesque conflict of interest and a gift to Labour. Badenoch must fire him, or accept that her talk of integrity is phoney.

Forget the honours list, real heroes are all around

EVERY New Year Honours List brings the same glossy headlines. Famous faces rewarded for contributions we're told to applaud. If people have used their platform or influence to improve society, then recognition is deserved. No bitterness here.

But let's be honest. The real heroes of this country rarely make the list. They're not famous enough, not fashionable enough, and, crucially, not loud enough. They don't have PR teams or Wikipedia pages. They just get on with it quietly.

Take my old high school teachers, Mr Behan and Mr Ewing. Two men who didn't just teach subjects, but helped raise generations of young boys, instilling discipline, decency and self-belief.

They shaped lives. They turned lads into good men. If that isn't nation-building, I don't know what is. Knight them. Or the dedicated nurse working extra hours each week to support patients. No applause. No honours. Just sacrifice. These are the people who hold Britain together. The everyday grafters whose contributions don't trend but truly matter.

GREEN PARTY LEADER GIVES HOPE TO THOSE FED UP WITH MODERN POLITICS

THE head of the Fabian Society has dismissed Green Party leader Zack Polanski as someone offering voters "fantasy solutions". I don't see fantasy – I see hope. And hope matters, especially for people who have been failed by tired parties for decades. When the system feels rigged and remote, hope isn't irresponsible, it's essential. The real problem in politics isn't too much optimism, it's the cynicism of parties that promise change then govern like frightened accountants. My concern is this: if Zack, left, ever gets into power, he must not crumble like Starmer's Labour.

DAILY EXPRESSO SEE HOST JJ ANISIOBI AND GUESTS IN NEW EPISODES MONDAY TO FRIDAY ON THE EXPRESS YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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Jail officers using pepper spray four times a day

BY **JAYMI McCANN**

PEPPER spray is being used an average of four times a day to control violent inmates across the prison system.

Data reveals that officers used PAVA – pelargonic acid vanillylamide – 1,379 times between January 1 and November 30, 2025, and it was drawn but not used on a further 643 instances, for a total of 2,022 in 11 months.

In 2024, it was used 1,331 times and drawn but not used 600 times in 12 months.

The spray causes immediate intense burning of the eyes and temporary blindness. It also affects the lungs.

The figures, revealed in a Parliamentary Written Question, also showed that in 2025 it was used 524 times against black inmates, 518 times against white people, and 121 times against Asian prisoners. It was also used against Muslims 550 times and Christians 531 times.

As of March 2024, the UK prison population was around 97,700.

Prisons minister Lord Timpson said: "PAVA spray is made available to protect staff and prisoners in the event of serious violence, or where there is an imminent risk of serious violence.

"Clear guidance has been issued to staff."

A Prison Service spokesman said: "PAVA is only deployed in limited circumstances by specially trained individuals."

Man held on shooting rap

BY **GEORGE JONES**

A MAN of 30 was rushed to hospital with gunshot wounds early yesterday morning.

A 35-year-old male was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder at the scene, police said.

Emergency services rushed to Bexleyheath, in south-east London, shortly after 2am.

The Metropolitan Police said: "Officers were called to reports of a shooting on Broadway, Bexleyheath.

"A 35-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder at the scene. He was taken to hospital due to his injuries."

AJ mourns with his friends' families after tragic crash

AJ with family members of his two dead friends

BY **JEREMY ARMSTRONG**

ANTHONY Joshua paid tribute to the two close friends killed in a horror crash in Nigeria as their funerals were held.

The former world heavyweight boxing champion was a passenger in the black Lexus when it ploughed into a stationary truck on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway last week.

He posted on social media in remembrance of Sina Ghami and Latif Ayodele, both 36, as loved ones gathered at a London mosque yesterday. The star posed with family members including one holding a framed photograph of Sina, who owned a gym in Collindale, North London.

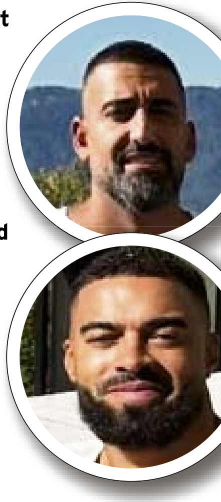
He captioned one post: "My brother's keeper," to express support for the relatives of Sina, his strength coach, and his personal trainer Latif, known as Latz.

Fans offered prayers and "heartfelt sympathy" following the post by AJ. One wrote: "You gained new family members now."

AJ, 36, arrived at London Stansted Airport on Friday after several days in hospital recovering from injuries sustained in the accident just hours after his arrival in Nigeria for a holiday.

It is believed he swapped seats with Latif from the front to the back of his SUV ahead of the accident.

Driver Kayode Adeniyi, 47, has denied all charges against him over the accident.



Friends Sina, top, and Latif, bottom

Cannabis farm growing under the noses of cops

EXCLUSIVE

BY **PAUL JEEVES** Crime Editor

From left, gang members Tung, Phan, Khamh and Nguyen-Van. Right, the farm site

A DRUG farm capable of producing £1million worth of cannabis operated within 100 yards of a police station.

Officers on patrol – both in cars and on foot – remained unaware of the large-scale operation unfolding near their base despite a strong smell.

The drug factory was only uncovered due to the property's astronomical electricity bill.

A Northern Power employee spotted the discrepancy and alerted the police that around £4,000 worth of electricity was being used at the premises in Pudsey, West Yorkshire.

They mounted a raid that uncovered 22 growing rooms spread across three floors, containing approximately 4,500 plants in various stages of growth, along with an extensive array of growing equipment.

Residents said they were stunned that police had failed to detect the factory as there had been a pungent smell "for weeks".

One said: "It's quite incredible that this was happening, literally under the noses of police. Officers must have passed it hundreds of times every day, yet failed to detect it. It's a bit embarrassing, really."

Last week four Vietnamese men were jailed at Leeds crown court after admitting producing cannabis. They all appeared via video link from HMP Leeds, where they were being held. Andrew Espley, prosecuting, told how police and the fire brigade attended the building on June 12 after receiving the tip-off from the energy firm.

Rescued

He told how two defendants, Pham Khac Tung and Tai Phan, attempted to flee across a roof but had to be rescued by firefighters and led to safety.

They were arrested along with their accomplices Vo Khamh and Tuan Nguyen-Van.

Mr Espley said that all four defendants had put forward a basis that they were "badly paid gardeners".

Khamh and Tung received 32 months, with Nguyen-Van and Phan receiving 27 months.

Judge Anesh Pema described the drug factory scheme as a "sophisticated production". All four men are liable for deportation after serving their sentence.

‘Share cafe tables with strangers to tackle loneliness’

BY **JAN DISLEY**

A CAMPAIGNER is encouraging more people to share tables with strangers as a way of tackling an “epidemic” of loneliness.

Mother-of-two Alex Hoskyn, 41, founded the Chatty Cafe movement after sitting in a tearoom feeling “fed up and lonely” during her maternity leave.

Her “chatter and natter” tables are at hundreds of venues. Now she’s hoping to expand it to help thousands of others.

She said: “This isn’t just for the elderly, and it’s not about forcing people to chat. It’s about giving them the opportunity to if they want.

Helped

“I think it’s important for people from a variety of age groups to mix.”

Recalling how she sat alone in a cafe as a new mum back in 2016, Alex, *right*, said: “There was an elderly lady on another table who looked really fed up and on another table was a guy with disabilities. They were just looking around the room. We could have really helped each other if we’d been sitting at one table. In our society, it’s a bit odd to just go up to somebody, so I didn’t.”

But Alex started a website and posted on social media about her idea. Since then 700 venues – including libraries and pubs – have signed up, helping about 30,000 people.

And the Chatty Cafe scheme has grown to include 600 volunteers who sit at the tables.

Alex hopes to grow it to 1,000 tables and raise £1million to train volunteers and fund publicity. She said: “Loneliness is an epidemic, it’s a national crisis.”

Widow Anne Barlow, 82, started using the scheme in Poynton, Cheshire, two months ago. She said: “You can share and you go home feeling uplifted. When your situation changes in life, you realise you need other people and more social interaction.”

Alex said: “There’s been amazing stories of people forming friendships and becoming part of the community.”

Kate hits the high notes

BY **JAN DISLEY**

THERE’S nothing blue about award winner Kate Hudson as she poses on the red carpet.

The US actress, 46, is beaming as she shows off her prize and sports a dark crimson floor-length gown with a plunging neckline.

The daughter of Goldie Hawn received the Icon honour at the 37th Annual Palm Springs International Film Awards in California.

Kate co-stars with Hugh Jackman, 57, in the Neil Diamond-inspired movie Song Sung Blue, which was released in the UK on New Year’s Day. The tearjerker, *below*, tells the true story of Mike and Claire Sardina who fell in love and made a living singing Diamond’s classics to audiences in and around Milwaukee during the 1990s.

The role has already earned Kate a Golden Globe nomination.

Timothee Chalamet, 30, was named Spotlight Actor of the Year.

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Victims of sex assaults suffer 'brain damage'

BY **STEPHEN BEECH**

MANY sexual assault victims also suffer a form of brain damage, research reveals.

Previous studies have shown that around 70% of women develop post-traumatic stress disorder after an attack.

Now, scientists have found that many of them exhibit a "marked reduction" in the usual communication between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex – two key brain areas dealing with processing and controlling emotions.

Synchronisation between the two areas can drop to near-zero in some victims, according to the findings.

Trauma

Previous PTSD studies, following natural disasters, accidents or war, have also revealed changes in how the brain communicates.

Now, a team of Spanish scientists have shown it is also the case after sexual assaults, following brain scans of 40 women with PTSD as a result of recent sexual assault trauma.

Dr Lydia Fortea, of the Hospital Clinic, Barcelona, said: "We found that in 22 of the women, communication between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex was effectively lost.

"It means the brain might struggle to manage fear responses or regulate emotions, which could explain why people with PTSD often experience intense fear."

Woman, 85, killed by van

BY **SARAH WARD**

A WOMAN has died after being struck by a van.

The 85-year-old pedestrian died in hospital following the collision in Stranraer, Dumfries and Galloway.

She had been on foot when the white Vauxhall Vivaro hit her at around 10.20am on Saturday.

Emergency services attended, and the woman was taken to the hospital but later died. No one else was injured.

The road reopened at around 7.15pm.

Sergeant Scott Costley appealed for witnesses and said: "Our thoughts are with the family of the woman who died."

Parakeets in Moss Side, Manchester

Parrots mimic leaves as they rustle up new perch

BY **CHARLIE FENTON**

PARAKEETS have transformed these leafless trees into a colourful living canopy, lighting up the night.

The bright green parrots are so tightly bunched they take on the appearance of singing foliage.

They were spotted gathered outside the Heineken factory in Moss Side, Manchester.

Ring-necked parakeets are the UK's only wild parrot, according to The Wildlife Trusts. Scientists believe pet owners released the birds into the wild a century ago, possibly prompted by media coverage of fatal "parrot fever" outbreaks in the 1920s and 1930s.

Parakeets are also the most northerly breeding parrot in the world.

Alongside their green feathers, they are identified by their long narrow tail and red bill. The birds are common in the south-east of England but have been seen as far north as Scotland.

Climate change forces birds to new heights

Species 'climbing' chilly mountains as temperatures rise

BY **STEPHEN BEECH**

OVERHEATED birds are moving higher up mountains due to climate change, according to researchers.

Many species have migrated towards colder areas in mountain ranges across Europe as temperatures have steadily risen over the past two decades.

Sunny southern slopes attract birds to live at higher elevations than shadier northern slopes, according to a study published in the journal Global Ecology and Biogeography. But the actual rate of "climb" is the same.

Researchers examined 177 species in four ranges: the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Scandinavian mountains and the Scottish Highlands.

Of those species, almost two-thirds (63%) moved uphill. The uphill movement has averaged about half a metre per year in the 2000s.

The fastest change happened in Scandinavia and the Alps, according to the study based on bird monitoring data from eight European countries between 2001 and 2021. For example, the northern wheatear has shifted an average of 33m uphill in the Scandinavian mountains since 2001. But no significant shift was observed in Britain or the Pyrenees.

Scientists say that indicates the causes, such as the intensity of climate change and human land use, vary from region to region.

In mountainous areas, local climatic conditions, or microclimates, can vary considerably even over short distances. For instance, the northern mountain sides receive less sunlight than the southern sides, resulting in cooler and wetter conditions.

However, Josephine Couet of the University of Helsinki, Finland, said: "Birds are moving uphill at the same rate on shady slopes, which suggests that warming temperatures are affecting the entire mountain landscape."

She added: "Mountain areas are not only majestic landscapes but also hotspots of biodiversity, and home to many species that depend on specific climatic and habitat conditions."

Tunnelling by protected badgers has caused part of a road in East Halton to fail, inset, causing its closure

Anger as mating badgers hold up vital road repairs

BY **CHARLIE FENTON**

MATING badgers which collapsed a road are now keeping it closed for months, leaving fed-up villagers with a detour of up to 36 miles.

The 2.5-mile route was shut in October due to damage caused by the protected animals digging a sett.

Highways chiefs had ruled that the road was "no longer safe for motorists". Repairs licensed to begin on October 13 were then halted until July 1 this year due to badger mating season, angering some locals in East Halton, Lincs.

Rob Waltham, Tory leader of North Lincolnshire Council, urged government advisers Natural England to take "urgent, pragmatic action" so the work can be started.

He added: "It is outrageous that protections affecting a handful of badgers during mating season mean six months of total inaction on a failing road. An entire village is left to live with danger, disruption and the slow erosion of its services.

"We respect the importance of protecting wildlife but the current situation has tipped completely out of balance. Farmers are being prevented from running their businesses properly, residents are facing daily disruption and a vital village post office is now under threat."

Staff tried to tempt the badgers to another underground burrow so the works could carry on but the animals returned to the original sett.

The road had been the quickest way north and west from the area.

One local said of the repairs: "They don't seem to be doing well so far! Looks like 1-0 to the badgers." Another added: "It has been left until one side of the road has collapsed.

"Repairs could have started after [last year's] breeding season."

Natural England said: "In exceptional circumstances, we can grant extensions to licences. We will be discussing next steps with North Lincolnshire Council."

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Colin on mission with film star cars

BY **SARAH WARD**

THE game's Bond for 007 fan Colin Anderson, who has built up an incredible motors and memorabilia collection worth millions of pounds.

Colin, 61, has run his museum for 21 years and among its 40 cars is a white Lotus Esprit used in Sir Roger Moore's 1977 hit film The Spy Who Loved Me.

He said: "It is an iconic car. You just want to put your foot down, so it's probably safer in here."

Bo'ness Motor Museum, near Falkirk, Scotland, attracts 10,000 visitors a year. It also features a working replica of the Chitty Chitty Bang Bang car, a van seen in Only Fools And Horses, plus a Harry Potter film Ford Anglia.

Showbiz

Colin says that three of his sons are actors which helped with showbiz connections.

Having owned an antiques shop in Paisley led Colin into the world of classic cars and he believes the exhibits "would probably be worth a couple of million" at auction.

He was inspired to begin collecting 007 artefacts after seeing seven-times Bond actor Sir Roger in his earlier TV show The Saint.

Colin added: "A lot of props are from James Bond films – we have a rocket launcher from a Pierce Brosnan film.

"A lot of James Bond fans do tours of Scotland and visit locations in the films."

Colin with 1977 Lotus and, from left: Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Only Fools, and Potter car

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BY **PATRICK HILL**
In Crans-Montana, Switzerland

Town falls silent for those killed in Swiss bar inferno

THREE days after their New Year celebrations were brought to a horrifying and sudden halt, Crans-Montana fell silent again yesterday.

Loved ones of those killed in the Le Constellation bar fire were among more than 2,000 mourners who joined a deliberately noiseless march through the streets of the Swiss ski resort. They took part in the emotional walk to the scene of the tragedy, which has left at least 40 dead and another 119 injured. There, they left flowers and candles at a growing shrine by the bar.

Young and old alike had set off on the short journey up the hill to the bar after attending a special mass at a nearby church, where Bishop Jean-Marie Lovey broke down in tears while leading the service.

Mourners

The mass began at 9am UK time inside the town's St Christopher's Chapel, which was packed to capacity.

Outside, where the temperature was -8C, more watched the service on a giant screen and loudspeakers.

Following the silent walk, mourners stood outside the scene of the disaster and took part in another vigil to remember the dead. It included a female vocalist singing a moving rendition of Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah.

The one-hour mass included tributes to the victims as well as singing by a church choir and soloists, as mourners, including survivors, hugged each other and openly wept. Spontaneous applause also broke out for a group of firefighters who joined the march.

Rev Gilles Cavin spoke of the "terrible uncertainty" for families unsure if their loved ones are among the dead or still alive among the injured. He said: "We pray for their friends hard hit by misery on this day that was meant to be one of festivities."

More than 2,000 people proceed silently to the bar in Switzerland where 40 died. Right, missing schoolgirl Charlotte Niddam

Partygoers as young as 14 died in the fire at Le Constellation, which began at 1.30am on New Year's Day. Footage emerged showing a sparkler in a bottle setting light to the nightclub's ceiling.

Local police confirmed this yesterday saying: "Based on the current state of the investigation, the fire originated from the use of sparklers."

Teenagers

Among those feared to have perished is Charlotte, 15, who was educated in Britain before her family moved to Switzerland.

By last night, police announced they had so far identified 24 victims including Swiss, French, Italian and Turkish nationals.

Seventeen of the dead are teenagers.

STAR JOINS CALLS

‘I’m grieving life I thought we’d have’

Little Mix singer’s agony as she’s told twins may never walk

BY **LUCY NEEDHAM**

IN May, singer Jesy Nelson spoke of how blessed she felt to have welcomed her twin girls after a difficult pregnancy.

Now she has learned her trials were only just beginning, with the heartbreaking news that Ocean and Story have a rare, incurable genetic condition and may never walk.

They have spinal muscular atrophy, which weakens every muscle in the body and causes problems with breathing and swallowing.

In a video shared with fans, the former Little Mix singer said she is determined to fight, and hope, and do everything she can for her girls.

But fighting back tears as she opened her heart, she added: “I am grieving a life I thought I was going to have with my children.”

About one in 10,000 babies is born with SMA. One in 40 people carries a faulty gene which causes the condition.

If both parents are carriers, there is a 25% chance their child will have SMA.

Prior to 2019, babies with SMA type one often would not survive until their second birthday, and infants with the milder type two would never walk, facing life in a wheelchair as well as multiple surgeries and respiratory infections.

In the past five years, treatments have been approved for use on the NHS that can stop the disease. They need to be started within the first weeks, or even days, of life.

Babies in the UK are not tested for SMA, so for many the diagnosis comes too late.

Charity SMA UK wants the condition to be added to a blood spot test, done with a heel prick on newborn babies, that checks for 10 rare but serious conditions.

In her video, Jesy backed calls for the test, which she said “can literally save their legs, and so many parts of their body”.

She ended her video by listing signs to look for, which include floppiness in babies, bell-shaped bellies and rapid breathing.

Ocean and Story were born at 31 weeks after a pregnancy in which Jesy, 34, needed surgery for twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome.

In her video, she described how she went to the GP after her mum noticed they were not moving as much as they should. Jesy said: “It wasn’t really a concern to me at the time.

“From the minute I left NICU I was told, ‘Your babies are premature so don’t compare your babies to other babies. They won’t reach the same milestones’.

“It didn’t really ring alarm bells to me. They are my first children and I was told not to compare them. Healthcare visitors insisted everything was fine and the girls were healthy.

“There were a few signs later on that the girls were struggling to feed properly. We would take them to the GP and say, ‘Our babies are not feeding as frequently as they

STILL SMILING THROUGH ALL THE CHALLENGES
DADDY LOVES YOU SO MUC

Zion’s post today of Ocean and Story after Jesy’s video message

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Slimming World

FOR HEEL-PRICK TEST

Jesy and fiance Zion with their twin girls in May and, right, sharing news in video

should.' They said it was fine and to try little and often."

Jesy went on: "Long story short, after the most gruelling three to four months and endless appointments, the girls have been diagnosed with a severe disease called SMA type one.

"It stands for spinal muscle atrophy which affects every muscle in the body.

"If it's not treated in time, your baby's life expectancy will not make it past the age of two."

She added: "Once the girls got treated it was a very rapid process, time is of the essence.

'I was told not to compare them. Healthcare visitors insisted the girls were healthy'

"When they assessed the girls at Great Ormond Street, we were told they were never going to be able to walk. They would probably never regain their neck strength. They will be disabled.

"The best thing we can do right now is to get them treatment and hope for the best.

"Thankfully, the girls have had their treatment which I'm so grateful for. If they didn't have it, they would die."

There is currently no cure for SMA, but there are treatments and support available to help people have the best possible quality of life. Explaining how her life has been turned upside down in the past four months, Jesy said: "The hospital has become my second home. I feel like I've had to become a nurse within two weeks of getting the diagnosis.

"I've had to do stuff no mother should have to do to their child.

"The last three months have been the most heartbreaking time of my life." Breaking down in tears, Jesy said: "I know I have to be grateful. At the end of the day they are still here and that's the main thing.

"They've had their treatment. I truly believe that my girls will defy all the orders and with the right help they will fight this." She added that she wanted to share the diagnosis to help other children to get treated as fast as possible.

'Thankfully, the girls have had their treatment. If they didn't have it, they would die'

After she posted her brave video, a number of celebrities reached out with supportive messages. Jesy's ex-partner Chris Hughes said: "A warrior Jess. Be easy on yourself. Sending prayers to you all, everyone is behind you guys." Jesy's musician fiance Zion Foster, 27, also responded by sharing his own message of hope. The dad shared a new photo of the girls, saying they were "smiling through the challenges".

"Daddy loves you so much," he added. Jesy's latest news comes after she revealed she had filmed a six-part documentary about her pregnancy and what she described as a "new chapter in her life".

The couple documented the highs and lows of their difficult nine months for a series with streaming service Amazon Prime Video.

Twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome affects 10 to 15% of identical twins who share a placenta and can have serious consequences.

It is caused by abnormal connecting blood vessels in the placenta, which leads to an imbalanced blood flow from one twin to the other.

The singer, from Romford, Essex, had emergency surgery and spent 10 weeks in hospital before giving birth to the twins on May 15.

During her pregnancy, Jesy also revealed the twins were monochorionic diamniotic, meaning they share a single placenta but have their own separate sacs.

Announcing the Amazon series, she said: "It's not been easy as it's been such a high-risk pregnancy, so you'll see all highs and lows and rollercoaster of emotions we have been through.

"I hope you will all join me on this journey as I really open up and say goodbye to the past and enter this new chapter in my life."

Before the twins were born, Zion said the pregnancy had brought him and Jesy closer together.

He explained: "We've grown to understand each other on a deeper level. It's these times when you really know what you have."

After they arrived, Jesy said: "It all happened so quickly, but we are so blessed that they are here with us, healthy and fighting strong."

Jesy won The X Factor with Little Mix in 2011 and scored five UK number ones. She left in December 2020 and has since gone solo.

The overhanging branches. Inset, Mary Davies

Helmets on for residents living in fear of tree fall

BY **EMILY-ROSE THOMPSON**

FALLING tree branches are forcing locals to wear bike helmets in their gardens to avoid injury.

Residents say the "dangerous" trees have been left to grow out of control for years, with branches falling on cars and into gardens.

Mary Davies, who lives in the street in Norwich, saw a neighbour wearing a helmet to protect themselves. She added: "They are a nuisance. Branches have fallen into my garden. I'm so worried."

Keith Powell said branches hit both his and his neighbours' cars, adding: "They are a real hazard. They need to be cut back."

Residents complained to Norfolk County Council but it does not own the land where the trees are.

They are on land owned by Catton Grove Nature Reserve, which applied last August to fell two sycamores.

Norfolk County Council said: "Our tree officer visited and the tree is not considered to pose an immediate danger to the highway."

Binned sausage rolls served up to 1st class travellers

Sacked worker 'went beyond for customer'

BY **JAMES MANNING**

A TRAIN worker who was sacked after first-class passengers were served sausage rolls taken from a bin said he had "gone too far for the customer".

Peter Duffy, who worked for London North Eastern Railway, prepared the disposed snacks which were then taken to the passengers by a colleague.

A member of the train crew told a tribunal in Newcastle that he heard laughter from the kitchen before the food was served and made a complaint after noticing the bin was empty when they had been told no sausage rolls were available, as they had been thrown away.

Mr Duffy was told CCTV appeared to show items of food in a bin had been retrieved by him in the presence of his colleague. The footage suggested it was then plated and reheated by Mr Duffy and then served.

Both workers were suspended by LNER pending an investigation into the alleged breach of food hygiene standards in May 2023.

Mr Duffy told this probe he went "over and beyond for the customer", adding: "I took them out as there were none left for people in first class, but they were wrapped in foil. That was me trying to do the best for the customer, which I am well known for." A union representative said Mr Duffy "suffered from transient global amnesia" that day – a temporary interruption of short-term memory. But he was dismissed in July 2023 for gross misconduct.

A colleague of Mr Duffy denied seeing him take food out of the bin and said they were laughing as they passed wind. But a tribunal in August found this evidence unreliable.

Mr Duffy's claims of unfair dismissal and discrimination were dismissed by the hearing and in a judgment published last week, the tribunal judge said LNER had acted reasonably in deciding to dismiss Mr Duffy.

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Old sloth Snuffles still the daddy

Mr Snuffles holds his fourth baby at Hamerton Zoo Park

BY **JAKE MEEUS-JONES**

A GRAND old sloth hugs his baby girl after becoming a father for the fourth time in his twilight years.

Mr Snuffles, one of the oldest sloths in the UK at the age of 35, and his mate Vee welcomed their latest addition just before Christmas.

Delighted staff at Hamerton Zoo Park, in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, are now set to name the infant female.

The zoo said: "Mr Snuffles is the second oldest sloth in the UK, at the grand age of 35. As the median life expectancy of two-toed sloths is 15, he is clearly doing well.

"Despite his age, he is happy to carry baby too to give Mum a break when she needs it."

Hamerton added that it was the fifth baby sloth born at the zoo in the past four years.

A 43-year-old female sloth called Lightcap, who lives at Folly Farm, Pembrokeshire, in Wales, is said to be the Britain's oldest.

Young farmer in 'get checked' alert after shock bowel cancer diagnosis

BY **JANE KIRBY**

A FARMER who was diagnosed with bowel cancer at the age of 33 has urged other young people to get any symptoms checked out by a doctor.

James Rogers, who runs a large Christmas tree farm, received the diagnosis last May.

He needed urgent surgery to remove a tumour and then had chemotherapy.

James, who lives with his partner Ellie Henderson and their daughters Amelia and Lily, said he first noticed symptoms while on holiday.

He said: "I had a little bit of blood in the faeces. I was on holiday, saw the blood, panicked a bit, and it then stopped.

"But I thought, 'I should go to the doctors about this'. I have seen blood before and always acted on it.

"The doctors did a blood test, which was all fine. They were very adamant it wouldn't be cancer. But I also had the fit test [faecal immunochemical test on a stool sample], which came back positive. I then learned I needed a colonoscopy." James, 34, had seen a doctor two years before after similar symptoms but a fit test at that time came back negative. He added: "My surgeon said this time, 'Oh yeah, that might have been a bleeding polyp before'.

"Who knows, but maybe if it had been removed at that point, then I wouldn't have had to go through this now.

Anxiety

"They did histology on the tumour. There were two lymph nodes right next to the tumour that were infected, and they said to reduce the risk of the cancer recurring, they would give me chemotherapy."

James, from Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire, said he "didn't really feel anything" when first diagnosed, as he was in shock.

He added: "I just felt emotionally numb to it. I think I was in so much shock, it didn't feel real. But once the reality kicked in so did the anxiety. I was told I needed a CT scan and an MRI. Waiting for those results was extremely scary because I didn't know whether the cancer was in other parts of my body.

"If it was, the prognosis would be far worse.

"I do feel very blessed not to have it elsewhere in my body. It does put life into perspective and change your outlook. The small things mean a lot more now.

"A month ago I had my first scan after my treatment and it came back all fine, thankfully."

James now wants to raise awareness of bowel cancer, especially among younger people.

He said: "A lot more young people are getting cancer now. I want to turn this negative situation into a positive by raising awareness about the symptoms."

Genevieve Edwards, chief executive of Bowel Cancer UK, said: "We're incredibly grateful to James and Ellie for raising awareness of their experience of bowel cancer.

"As James's story shows, bowel cancer is treatable and curable, especially if diagnosed early."

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STARTS INSIDE SATURDAY'S
DAILY EXPRESS

Voucher required. Valid in England, Wales and NI only. Terms and exclusions apply. See Saturday's paper for details.

LOSE WEIGHT NATURALLY... WITHOUT FAT JABS

Feeling bloated and unwell after Christmas? Health campaigner STEVE BENNETT, who has advised the House of Lords about obesity issues, reveals the best ways to drop the pounds and feel good

clubwell
BAILEY

Avoid junk food, says health expert Steve Bennett, main

FOR 25 years, I battled obesity despite being the CEO of a £100million online retail company with access to the best advice money could buy. I jogged most mornings, restricted calories religiously and tried every diet going. Nothing worked long-term.

Today, having transitioned from business to become a qualified health coach, I've not only maintained a healthy weight for years but helped thousands achieve the same as the founder of Clubwell, the UK's first – and free – app-based wellness programme.

The weight-loss industry thrives on confusion but the solution is remarkably straightforward once you understand what's actually happening in your body.

Here's what you need to know...

Your entire bloodstream, all five litres of it, is designed to carry just one teaspoon of sugar. Exceed this and your body releases insulin to remove the excess.

Here's what nobody tells you: insulin is your fat-storage hormone. When it floods your system, burning body fat becomes virtually impossible. It's like trying to empty a bath while the taps are running.

Nine out of 10 adults now have some degree of insulin resistance, meaning their bodies require increasingly more insulin to manage blood sugar. This creates a vicious cycle: more insulin leads to more fat storage, which leads to further insulin resistance.

SIX EVIDENCE-BASED WEIGHT LOSS STRATEGIES

1. Fibre first

This single change transforms everything. Start every meal with high-fibre foods: nuts, seeds or green vegetables. Fibre creates a gel in your intestines that slows sugar absorption, reducing the insulin response by up to 30%. I call it addition, not subtraction; you're adding food before your meal, not restricting anything.

Aim for 30g to 35g of fibre daily. Most Britons get just 15g. The shortfall directly correlates with our obesity epidemic. Legumes (beans, lentils and peas), whole grains (oats, brown rice), nuts and seeds and certain fruit and vegetables are all excellent sources.

The Clubwell app details every "real" food in the supermarkets, with their corresponding fibre amount.

2. Eliminate ultra-processed foods

If it comes in a packet with more than five ingredients, put it back. Food manufacturers deliberately strip out fibre – it makes you feel full, so you eat less – and pump in the "Taste Bud Trio": sugar, fat and salt.

This combination triggers dopamine responses similar to cocaine. You're not lacking willpower – you're fighting engineered addiction.

Shop the supermarket perimeter: fresh meat, fish, eggs, vegetables, nuts. Real food doesn't need an ingredients list.

3. Protein at every meal

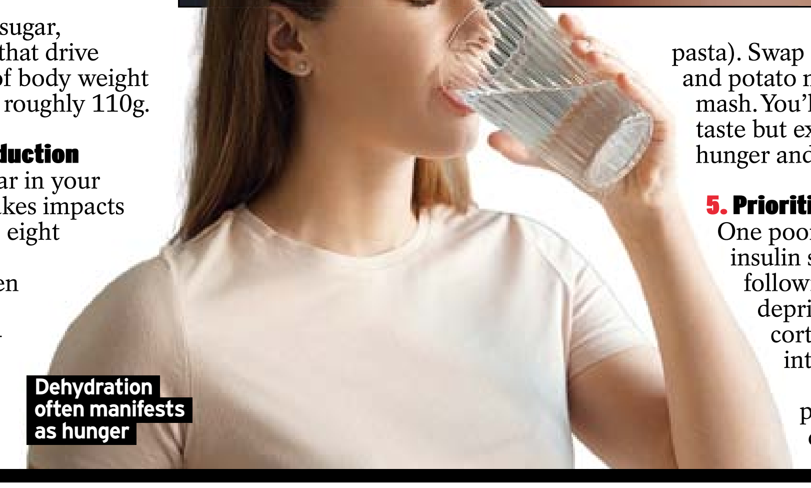
Protein requires 20-30% of its own calories just to digest, compared with 5-10% for carbohydrates. A 100-calorie portion of chicken effectively provides just 70 to 80 calories after digestion.

Protein also stabilises blood sugar, preventing the energy crashes that drive snacking. Target 1.6g per kilo of body weight daily. For a 70kg person, that's roughly 110g.

4. Strategic carbohydrate reduction

All carbohydrates become sugar in your bloodstream. A bowl of cornflakes impacts your blood sugar identically to eight teaspoons of table sugar. That "healthy" jacket potato? Fifteen teaspoons' worth.

I'm not suggesting zero carbs – that's unnecessary. Instead, choose fibrous vegetables (broccoli, spinach, cauliflower) over starches (potatoes, rice, pasta). Swap regular pasta for fibre noodles, and potato mash for cauliflower or celeriac mash. You'll barely notice the difference in taste but experience dramatic changes in hunger and energy levels.



Dehydration often manifests as hunger

5. Prioritise sleep

One poor night's sleep reduces insulin sensitivity by up to 25% the following day. Your body treats sleep deprivation as a stress, releasing cortisol which dumps stored sugar into your bloodstream.

This triggers insulin release, promoting fat storage. Sleep deprivation also increases ghrelin – your hunger hormone – while suppressing leptin – your satiety hormone. You become hungrier while simultaneously lacking the willpower to resist poor food choices. Aim for seven to nine hours nightly. It's not negotiable if you're serious about weight loss.

6. Movement matters more than exercise

I used to jog regularly while remaining obese. Why? Because exercise alone cannot compensate for a poor diet. However, movement dramatically improves insulin sensitivity. A 20-minute walk after meals can lower blood sugar spikes by 22%. This isn't about burning calories, it's about your

Club well
BAILEY.
BAILEY.

Lean meat and greens are high in fibre and protein

Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep a night

Regular exercise, even in short bursts, is good

muscles acting as glucose sponges, soaking up excess sugar without requiring insulin.

Don't sit for more than an hour at a time. Stand while taking phone calls. Walk to the shops. Do some gardening. Play with your grandchildren. Your body doesn't distinguish between "exercise" and "active living". Both improve metabolic health.

THE FLUID FACTOR

Hydration affects metabolism more than most realise. Mild dehydration slows metabolic rate and often manifests as hunger. Before reaching for a snack, drink a large glass of water and wait 20 minutes. Avoid fruit juices, even "healthy" ones. Orange juice contains as much sugar as cola, just without the fizz.

The fructose in juice bypasses normal satiety signals, leaving you perpetually hungry whilst damaging your liver through a process called de novo lipogenesis – literally "making new fat".

Coffee and tea, consumed black or with minimal full-fat milk, can actually support weight loss through their effects on metabolism. Just avoid sugar and artificial sweeteners, as both trigger insulin responses.

THE GLP-1 INJECTION REALITY

I'm frequently asked about weight-loss injections like Wegovy and Mounjaro. Here's my honest assessment: they work, but at what cost? These medications suppress appetite by mimicking GLP-1, a hormone your gut naturally produces when you eat fibre. Notice the connection? You can achieve similar effects naturally by eating more fibre.

There are problems with fat jabs, too. Research shows users lose almost as much muscle as fat. Muscle burns calories even at rest, so losing it devastates your metabolic rate. When you stop the injections – and eventually, you must – you've got less muscle than when you started. Weight regains rapidly, often surpassing your original weight. Also, the injections don't address why you gained weight initially. Stop them without changing your diet and lifestyle and you'll return to exactly where you started – potentially worse.

They're expensive, require lifelong use for sustained effect and come with side effects including nausea and vomiting. Some are so serious they can be life-threatening. If you're considering GLP-1 medications, I urge you to first try increasing dietary fibre to 35g daily for three months. Many people achieve comparable results naturally without the risks and costs. If you do decide on injections, I 100% recommend you speak to your doctor first.

MY WORK WITH THE HOUSE OF LORDS

Last year, I was invited to present to the House of Lords on obesity solutions. The government has proposed nearly 700 different policies since 1992 to tackle obesity yet rates continue to climb. Why? Because politicians fundamentally misunderstand the problem.

Their guidance still promotes high-carbohydrate diets based on 1970s science. The Eatwell Guide, which dictates school meals, hospital food and military rations, recommends that over 50% of calories come from carbohydrates. This is precisely what's making us sick.

I presented evidence that obesity isn't about calories or lack of willpower. It's a hormonal disorder driven by insulin resistance, caused primarily by our modern diet of fibre-stripped, sugar-laden, processed foods.

The solution isn't more restrictions or education about portion control. It's changing the fundamental advice we give people about what to eat. We need to prioritise metabolic health over calorie counting, fibre over grains and whole foods over processed alternatives.

There's growing interest in Parliament for evidence-based approaches. I'm hopeful we'll see significant policy changes in the next few years, though the food industry lobby remains powerful.

THE PATH FORWARD

Weight loss doesn't require perfection, just consistency with the basics. Prioritise fibre, eliminate processed foods, eat adequate protein, reduce refined carbohydrates, sleep properly and move regularly.

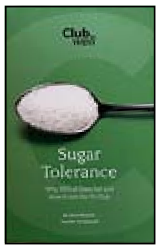
At Clubwell, we've distilled this into a four-step programme: Fibre First, then the Human Diet (whole, unprocessed foods), which naturally leads to lower carbohydrate intake, which facilitates intermittent fasting. Each step makes the next easier.

We've also developed the Metabolic Sugar Tolerance Monitor, allowing people to measure their metabolic health at home. Most people have no idea their metabolism is struggling until they develop diabetes or heart disease. Early detection enables early intervention.

The weight-loss industry profits from complexity and confusion. The truth is simpler than it would have you believe. Your body isn't malfunctioning – it's responding exactly as evolution designed, to an environment it wasn't built for. Change the environment – what you eat and how you live – and your body responds accordingly. After 25 years of failure, I lost weight and have kept it off for years. As I approach my 60th birthday I am in the best shape of my life. Not through willpower or restriction but by understanding and working with my body's natural systems.

If I can do it, so can you.

● *For more information, visit clubwell.co.uk. Sugar Tolerance: Why 99% of Diets Fail and how to join the 1% by Steve Bennett (Amazon, £9.99) is out now*



30-SECOND CHALLENGE

JUST follow the instructions from left to right, starting with the number given to reach an answer at the end of the row. Set your own 30-second challenge. For the very young or arithmetically rusty, you have 30 seconds for the BEGINNER task.

For a greater challenge, try BEGINNER and INTERMEDIATE in 30 seconds. True mental gymnasts should try INTERMEDIATE and ADVANCED in 30 seconds together.

Today's answers can be found in the puzzles pullout

										YOUR ANSWERS
Beginner	2	SQUARE IT	x23	+16	÷12	+78	2/3 OF THIS	-19	÷13	
Intermediate	41	x6	+98	3/4 OF THIS	-86	÷4	+32	3/5 OF THIS	+287	
Advanced	13	x6	+51	2/3 OF THIS	+482	9/71 OF THIS	-4	INCREASE BY 25%	x4	

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3

LOTTERY

6 20 34 38 47 48 4

THUNDERBALL

2 3 9 13 38 9

FRIDAY, JANUARY 2

EUROMILLIONS 8 27 42 44 46 1 10

THUNDERBALL 4 12 18 19 32 9

THURSDAY, JANUARY 1

SET FOR LIFE 7 8 41 43 45 10

THE HEALTH LOTTERY

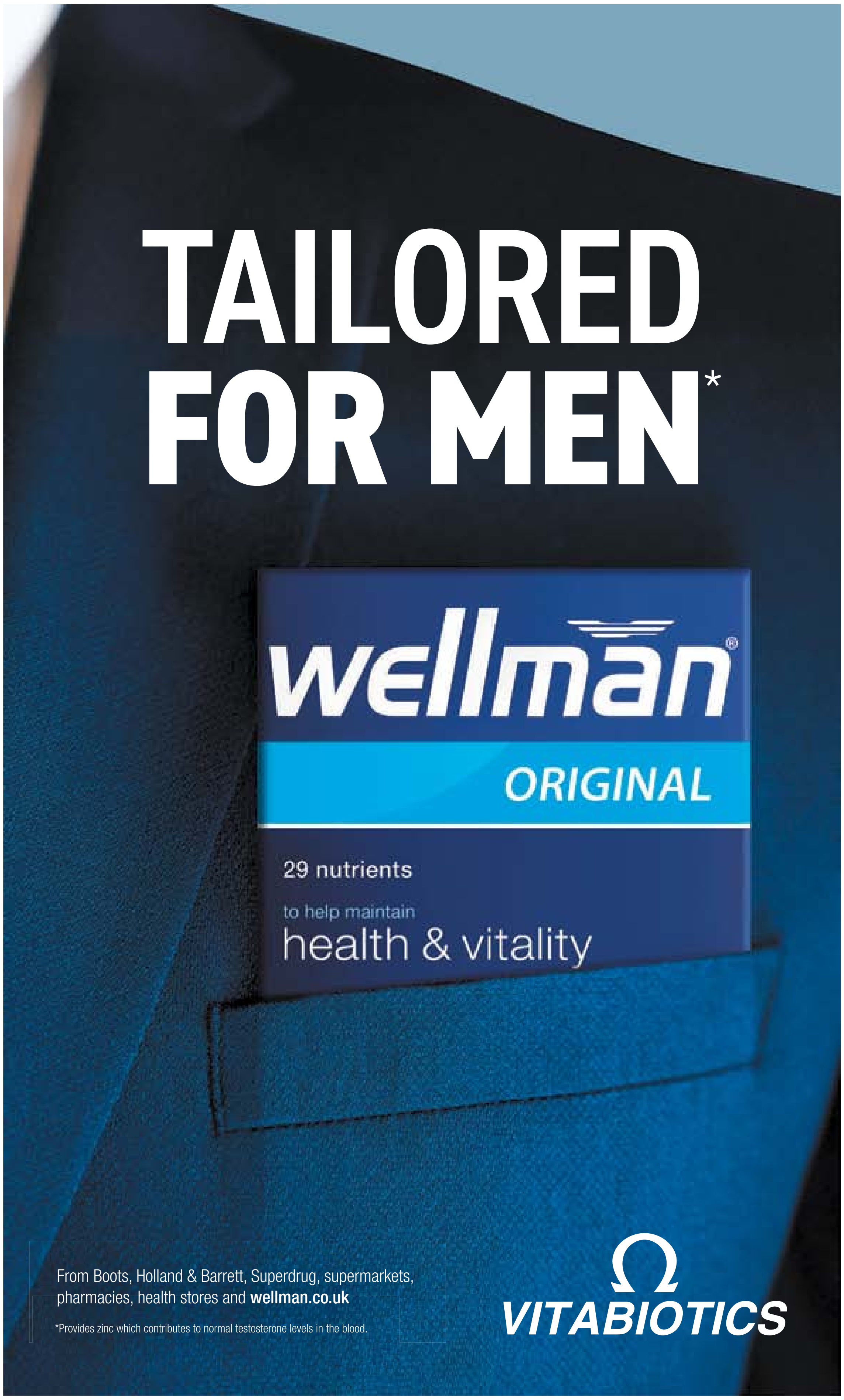
SUNDAY, JANUARY 4

6 18 25 28 35 34

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3

11 19 35 49 50 4

The Health Lottery has raised more than £135m for health-related causes since 2011. Details at thehealthlotteryfoundation.org.uk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VITABIOTICS

PHONE POLL RESULTS

We asked in our poll on Friday:

Do you think Labour will cut small boat crossings in 2026?

YES: 9%

NO: 91%

DO YOU HAVE A STORY OR A PHOTO?

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SUDOKU

Fill in all the squares so that each row, each column, and each 3x3 square contain all the digits from 1 to 9

8		2		9		1		
		7			8		9	4
	9	4		2	7	8		
6			2				3	
	1		8		9		4	2
	2			3	5			8
			6	4		3	8	
2	7			8				
		8		7		9		6

This is the Quick Sudoku for the solver in a hurry.
For today's solution call:
09071 812 571
(Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge)
For extra clues call:
09013 225 602
(Calls cost 75p plus your telephone company's network access charge)

MORE PUZZLES – PULLOUT

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

9	6	5	4	3	7	2	1	8
8	7	3	2	6	1	5	9	4
1	2	4	8	9	5	6	7	3
3	8	2	1	5	4	7	6	9
6	9	7	3	8	2	1	4	5
5	4	1	6	7	9	3	8	2
7	3	8	9	2	6	4	5	1
4	5	9	7	1	3	8	2	6
2	1	6	5	4	8	9	3	7

Alex at the controls of his dad James' ride-on back garden railway

Chuffed dad builds railway in garden

BY **CHARLIE FENTON**

TRAIN-MAD James Ardin has spent more than five years building a working railway line in his back garden.

Four mini-locos pull handmade carriages around a 660-yard circuit on the plot in Holmpton, East Yorks, which also features rail memorabilia.

James, 36, has spent thousands of pounds on his hobby since he was a teenager. He started the track in 2020, helped by 12 friends.

The line is made of timber and aluminium while his locos include steam, electric and battery-powered engines.

He revealed: "It has always been an ambition of mine to have a working track.

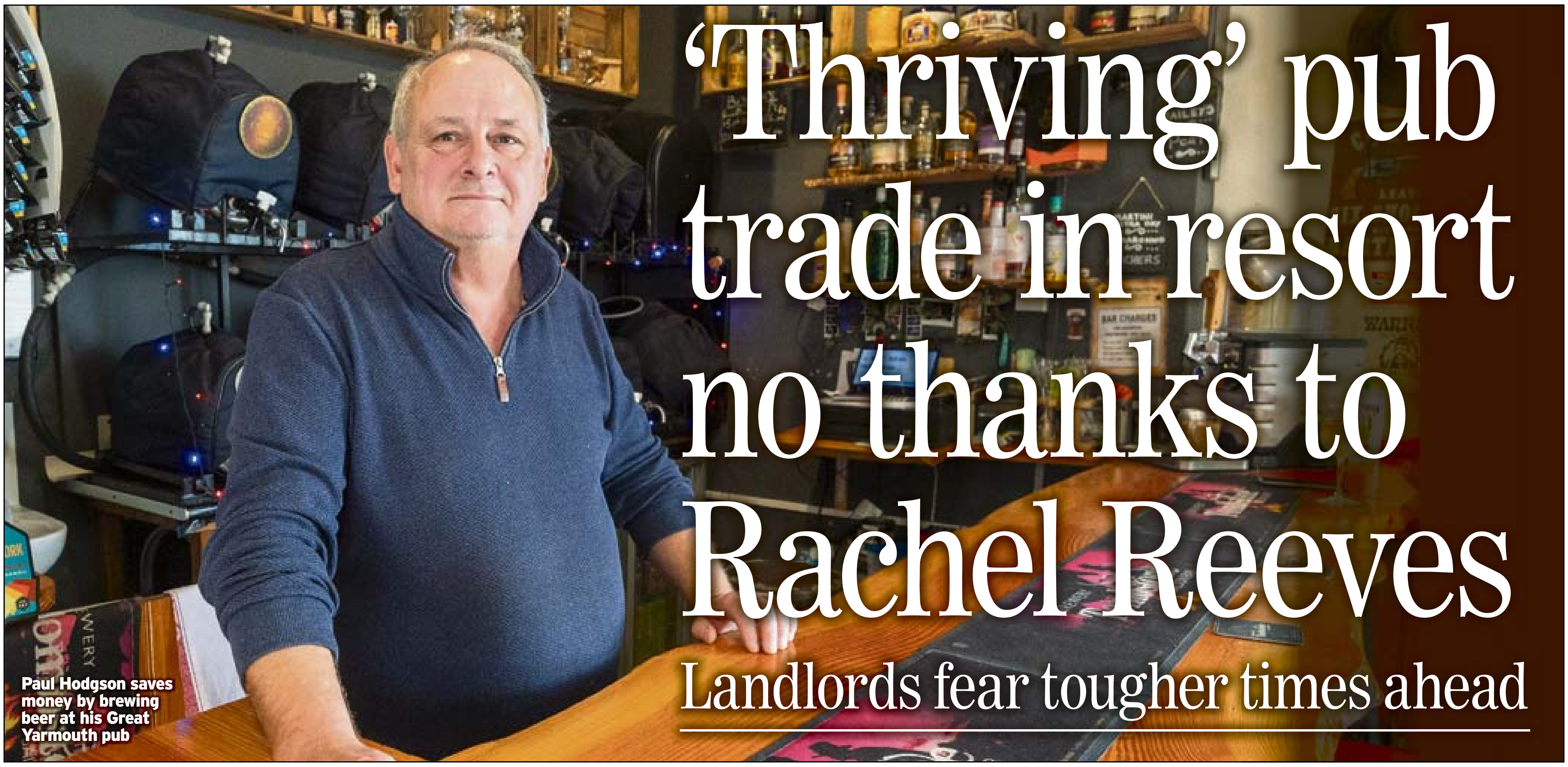
"It is something I have wanted for many years...and I am very proud. The neighbours showed a little apprehension at first as they didn't know what to expect. They have since warmed to it – they see it as a nice little addition to the area."

James, who also works on trains, said son Alexander, 12, and daughter Annabelle, 5, love riding the line while "understanding" wife Abigail, 35, "doesn't mind" having the track.

All aboard as train buff James and his family go for a trip on their line

‘Thriving’ pub trade in resort no thanks to Rachel Reeves

Landlords fear tougher times ahead



Paul Hodgson saves money by brewing beer at his Great Yarmouth pub

EXCLUSIVE

BY **ANDREW PAPWORTH**

IT might be closing time for many pubs but one seaside town is refusing to call last orders, despite huge financial pressure.

With watering holes shutting at a rate of eight a week nationally, Great Yarmouth is bucking the trend, with more pubs per person than any other town.

Research by Best New Bingo Sites found the tourist destination has 242 drinking establishments per 100,000 residents – an impressive achievement, considering about a third of pubs have vanished nationwide in 25 years.

The coastal resort has faced its own economic tidal waves, with a slump in traditional industries such as fishing, alongside the closure of many high street shops. But the Norfolk town’s packed bars and taverns show people still support their locals.

Konrad Beutler, vice-chairman of East Norfolk Campaign for Real Ale, confirmed there is a thriving pub scene in Yarmouth, helped by low pint prices.

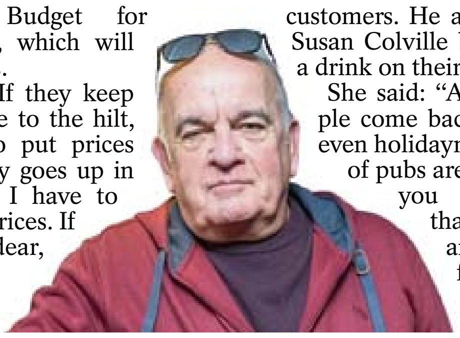
He said: “The pub trade is good. The tourist trade is very good year-round. It’s very reasonable to drink here. There is very competitive pricing.”

Yet it has not been plain sailing for even Yarmouth’s most successful pubs. Paul Hodgson has grown his Tombstone from a private brewery into a bar, open seven days a week, over 12 years.

It had its best trading year in 2024. But he fears challenging times ahead. He largely blames Chancellor Rachel Reeves’s November Budget for hiking taxes, which will hit customers.

He said: “If they keep taxing people to the hilt, we’ve got to put prices up. Beer duty goes up in February, so I have to re-evaluate prices. If it gets too dear, people won’t come. Fortunately, we brew our beer, so can keep costs down. But electricity prices have gone through the roof.

Ian Handley and Susan Colville bond with punters



Tavern regular Rene Iliff

“The living wage has gone up. National insurance contributions have recently gone up.

“They’re also re-evaluating business rates. They’re taking away the 40% reduction in hospitality business rates. That’s all going to have a knock-on effect.”

Birthday

He wants the Chancellor to increase the threshold for VAT taxable turnover from £90,000 a year to £150,000 a year. He said: “That would take a whole swathe of small businesses out of it and then we can reinvest that money in the businesses to grow.”

Ian Handley, landlord of The Coachmakers Arms, said he wants “concessions” from Ms Reeves to help the sector.

He believes his pub has survived because of its bond with customers. He and landlady Susan Colville buy regulars a drink on their birthday.

She said: “A lot of people come back to see us, even holidaymakers. A lot of pubs are a franchise, you don’t have that landlord and landlady feel. We always say if you look after your customers, they’ll look after you – and they do, because they come every day.”

Regular Ricky Jeffs, 47, said of the town: “In the afternoons it’s a bit like Benidorm. It’s nice.

“There are a lot of retired people here and many of them enjoy a drink in the afternoon. They also play bingo and sing karaoke.

“The afternoons are lovely. It is retired people generally or roofers who have worked since 6am.”

Vanessa Staff, landlady of the Market Tavern, said older people keep the pubs running.

She added: “They want a conversation. They come in for lunch on their own and we’ll have a chat. Over the years, they become part of your family.”

Market Tavern regular Rene Iliff, 70, said low prices bring punters in.

But he added: “Everything is going up and up.”

And punters and landlords all agree – pubs are vital to Yarmouth and should be protected.

Mr Hodgson added: “Pubs are social places. You get a lot of single people and elderly people come out and socialise in them.

“And everyone will talk to each other. If that goes, who are they going to talk to? They just sit at home on their own.

“If pubs go, people will miss them and the social aspect of the country goes.”

OPINION: PAGE 14

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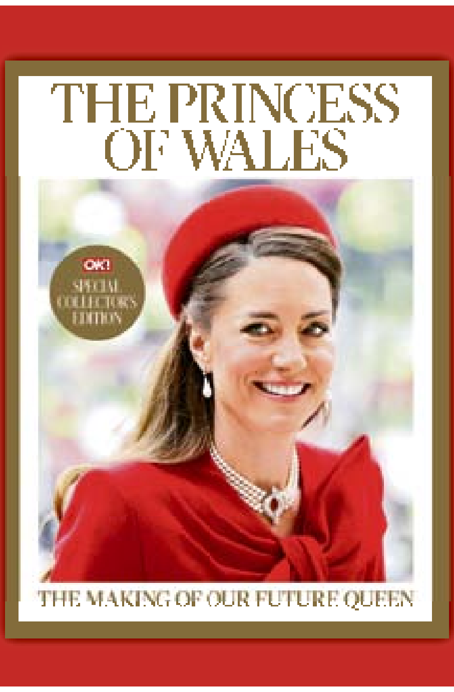

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BEAUTY

GET THAT GLOW

Edited by **LAURA MULLEY**

HEAVY LIFTING

You might be sick to death of the phrase "defying gravity" by now (thank you, Wicked), but it also happens to be the perfect way to describe Rimmel's latest mascara, Thrill Seeker Megalift, £12.99. With a name that sounds a lot like a new rollercoaster, this promises to hoick lashes up by 28 degrees before delivering the impact of six times more volume to even the sparsest of hairs.

SANDALWOOD & PINK PEPPER
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Eau so soothing

Can a perfume actually make you sleep better? Yes, according to sleep specialists This Works, who have created the Own Time Eau De Parfum, from £10 for 5ml, a luxe woody, ambery scent of sandalwood and pink pepper containing certain essential oils proven to calm the central nervous system. And I actually agree; having struggled with broken sleep recently, spritzing this on before bed gave me a noticeably better night's rest.

NATURAL BEAUTY

Good make-up starts with good skincare, which is why Katoa Botanicals, created by make-up artist Penelope Ryan, is worth taking notice of.

Inspired by Penny's Mãori heritage, Katoa has a big focus on sustainability without compromising on results, using plant-cell technology and 100% biodegradable packaging. I like Luminess Hydra Créme, £55, which gives a lovely glow without any greasiness, and perfectly primes the skin for make-up.

KATOA BOTANICALS
KATOA BOTANICALS

HEALTHY HANDS

Give your fingernails a health kick this January without sacrificing on style with Margaret Dabbs London's extended shade line-up of its Nail Strengthening Treatment, £16, with each named after one of its London clinics.

Containing argan oil, vitamins and a special strength-boosting ingredient derived from celery seed, they help to harden and hydrate nails while also providing a rich, glossy colour.

HEALTH & BEAUTY

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PLUS Puzzles

gisou
honey glaze collagen therapy lip mask

SWEET TALKING

You can never have too many lip balms in winter, and here's a new one that's almost good enough to eat. Viral beauty brand Gisou, whose products all have honey from founder Negin Mirsalehi's own bee garden at their base, has just launched Honey Glaze Collagen Therapy Lip Mask, £22, and it's a little pot of joy. It cocoons dry lips in a rich blanket of hydrating goodness, and comes with a cute little spoon as a mess-free way to scoop every last drop out of the pot.

HEALTH LIVE LIFE WELL

Edited by **MATT NIXSON AND HANNA GEISSLER**

Sleep, fitness, mood, even fertility... they all track them so which smart ring is for you?

Ditch the smartwatch, rings are the thing! HANNA GEISSLER road-tested the must-have new wearable health tech

CHOICES *The Luna ring collection*

From sleep tracking to calorie counting, stress analysis and heart-rate graphs, we have never had more health data quite literally at our fingertips. Smart rings – such as those made by Oura, Samsung and Luna – are soaring in popularity. Less bulky than watches and boasting almost a week-long battery life, these bands are packed with sensors to measure biometrics including temperature, blood oxygen and physical activity.

Data is synced to a smartphone app which provides a wealth of insights and can reveal long-term trends or changes.

Rings lack the GPS tracking capabilities of watches and cannot display notifications, but the absence of a screen is a key attraction for many, says Annika Bizon, vice president of product and marketing at Samsung UK & Ireland.

She says: "They offer discreet, stylish health tracking. That discretion can matter more than you think as many people prefer to monitor their progress quietly. It's more than just a fashion statement, it is a powerful way to stay connected to your wellbeing that delivers vital health insights in a form factor that works for real life."

Swapnil Vats, product and business head at Luna, says many New Year's resolutions fail because we set ambitious targets without understanding what our body needs, and smart rings can help decode your physiology to identify what holds you back.

He adds: "They are being adopted more by people who seek to also monitor sleep and recovery."

Oura's recent Year in Review report, which gathered data from thousands of users worldwide, revealed the UK and Northern Ireland topped the league table for activity, averaging a daily score of 85.19 out of 100. Meanwhile, New Zealand and Australia ranked highest for sleep, averaging 80 and 79.4 out of 100, respectively.

Globally, Friday was the most stressful day of the week and users were most active on Saturday but also slept the worst. Women got more sleep than men but also did more physical activity and clocked up the most stress, averaging 129 minutes of stress daily while men averaged 97.

Experts are predicting steady growth in the market for wearable health trackers, fuelled both by people who take their data extremely seriously and those simply looking to gamify lifestyle improvements. So whether you're a fitness fanatic, setting some New Year's goals, or just dipping your toe into the waters of health tracking, here's a simple guide to smart rings.

SLEEP

Sleep is one of the core metrics smart rings track. They typically offer a daily sleep score out of 100 which takes into account factors such as how long it took you to fall asleep, how long you spent in each sleep stage, and the timing of your sleep.

They can also monitor overnight blood oxygen saturation levels, which indicate how efficiently your body circulates and absorbs oxygen, respiratory rate and skin temperature trends. Correlating this data with daily habits can help identify factors that are disrupting your sleep.

Maybe you had a late meal or drank alcohol close to bedtime, and then recorded less deep sleep. It can show whether evening workouts help or hamper your recovery too.

Some rings also offer insights into your sleep chronotype (whether you're an early bird or a night owl) and circadian rhythm alignment. These can help you tweak your habits.

Smartwatches often have a shorter battery life which can get in the way of sleep tracking. says Sofia Strommer, behavioural scientist at Oura.

"Because rings are comfortable and unobtrusive, people tend to wear them continuously, leading to more complete data and more meaningful, personalised insights."

ENERGY/READINESS

Smart rings usually give you an overall energy or readiness score for the day, taking into account factors such as recent physical activity and sleep patterns. A higher score indicates you are primed for peak performance while a low score can indicate a need to focus on recovery. This is obviously something you can often feel in your body, but having it confirmed can help you decide whether to push yourself or take it easy. The best smart rings can pick up subtle signs you may not notice, such as sleep debt, stress, and training fatigue.

ACTIVITY

All smart rings typically track steps and calories burned during physical exertion, and offer a daily activity score which indicates how well you are meeting your goals. Most can detect workouts and are water resistant, so they can be safely worn while swimming. Sofia says the devices can provide crucial guidance to help those aiming to hit fitness goals "build consistency and train smarter". She adds: "Whether someone is working towards increasing daily movement, improving workout performance, or training for something specific, Oura can deliver insights on how their body is responding to activity."

PERIOD TRACKING/FERTILITY

Smart rings can help female users predict their cycles by detecting small changes in overnight skin temperature associated with different stages in the menstrual cycle. They can also estimate windows of peak fertility and detect ovulation with greater accuracy than apps relying on only manual data entry.

Swapnil explains that the Luna Ring combines "temperature trends, cycle patterns, and physiological shifts to predict fertile windows and ovulation phases with high precision". He adds: "It gives users a clear, science-based view of their monthly cycle to support family planning or cycle awareness."

Oura Ring users have even reported that their devices revealed they were pregnant before they spotted any signs,

although this feature can be turned off.

However, devices are not medical fertility trackers and readings can sometimes be affected by stress, illness, travel and poor sleep.

STRESS

Biometrics including resting heart rate and heart rate variability (the variation in time between heartbeats) can provide a fascinating insight into stress levels. Sofia says: "Research continues to show how chronic stress can lead to negative health outcomes, including cardiovascular disease and anxiety and depression. While short bursts of stress are normal, ongoing stress can compound over time and impact everything from performance to sleep."

The Oura, Luna and Samsung ring apps all offer help with breathing or relaxation exercises to manage stress. For example, Samsung encourages regular mood check-ins and can guide you through meditations or breathing exercises, such as box breathing.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Any one of these scores can be useful but the real magic happens when insights from a range of metrics are combined. Oura, Luna and Samsung have all harnessed the power of AI to provide in-app analysis.

The AI systems draw on days, weeks or months of data to identify trends you might have missed and provide personalised advice on how to improve your health habits. And all three come with AI-powered chatbots. These are more primitive than ChatGPT but a nice alternative if you get tired of scrolling through numbers and graphs.

*These are the key features offered by most smart rings but every brand offers a unique range of health insights. Rings vary in price, thickness and breadth of health data, and some require an additional subscription to unlock full insights. If you decide that it's time to put a ring on it, do your research and consider which factors are most important for you.

RING THE CHANGES

DECISIONS *Hanna tries out the Oura Ring 4 Ceramic in Cloud*

By Hanna Geissler

I'm no fitness fanatic but I like having some data to track my progress, so a smart ring offers all the insights I'm looking for in a compact and subtle device.

I spent around two months trying three rings and have been totally converted, and gone are the days of a permanent tan line on my wrist from wearing a smartwatch.

The three rings were:

- **Oura Ring 4 Ceramic – £499, requires a subscription of £5.99 per month or £69.99 annually.**
- **Luna Ring – £299, no subscription.**
- **Samsung Galaxy Ring – £399, no subscription but only compatible with an Android smartphone.**

The Oura Ring 4 offered the best depth of insight and had my favourite app interface – I liked being able to see all of my scores with a quick glance at the top of the screen. But it was the most expensive option and requires a monthly subscription.

It was also the chunkiest at 3.51mm thick, compared with 2.6mm and 2.8mm for the Samsung Galaxy and Luna rings, respectively. (Although the standard Oura Ring 4 is thinner at 2.9mm.)

The Oura sometimes mistakenly thought I had been napping or doing yoga when I hadn't, but I also found its app the easiest for confirming and logging my activities.

The Luna Ring is a more budget-friendly option that still offers the key metrics. The "sunlit gold" colour blended in beautifully with my gold jewellery.

I liked the circadian alignment clock which showed recommended windows for drinking caffeine, winding down before bedtime and other habits. And the portable charging case is impressive, extending the battery life to up to 30 days.

The Samsung Galaxy Ring was by far the most comfortable fit thanks to a slim, slightly concave band. I quickly forgot I was wearing it.

I liked the bright and cheerful design of the Samsung Health app, which also offers the capability to manually enter other health data such as blood pressure and blood sugar readings.

The easily accessible guided meditations and breathing exercises were another nice touch.

So which will I stick with? I have an iPhone so that rules out Samsung (I borrowed an Android phone to test it). Samsung and Luna win with thinner rings for comfort, but overall I would still choose the Oura for its breadth of features, despite the extra cost of the subscription.

> *'I found the Oura app the easiest for logging my activities, but the Luna ring is budget-friendly'*

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YOUR HEALTH MATTERS

What could be the cause of constant tiring coughing?

Q I've had a bad tickly cough for months now with a lot of mucus. I thought it was due to dairy foods and have cut back on them, but I'm not sure that has made much of a difference, and the constant coughing is very tiring. What is your advice?

A There are two common causes of the type of cough you describe. The first is secretions from the nose passing back down into the throat – a postnasal drip – and though in the short term this can just be due to a cold, more persistent symptoms are often due to nose inflammation caused by an allergy.

Though allergic rhinitis is sometimes caused by foods, airborne allergens, such as house dust mites and moulds are a more likely cause, along with pollens in the warmer weather. The other common cause is reflux of acid from the stomach back to the throat, where it causes inflammation, which in turn produces mucus.

Though many people with this often have heartburn as well, sometimes a sore throat and cough is the only symptom. A persistent tickly cough can also be a side effect of some medications, especially ACE inhibitors, such as ramipril (and others ending with "pril") and calcium channel blockers, such as amlodipine (and others ending in "dipine"). So the best thing to do is speak to a doctor who can help sort out the cause, and if medication is to blame, prescribe an alternative.

Q I'm 73, in good health and don't take any medication. However, my latest blood tests have shown my cholesterol is higher than normal. I was told I had a 29% risk of a stroke and I was offered a statin to get my cholesterol down, but I'd prefer to tackle it with my diet. I travel a lot and was advised I should tell my insurance company about my results. Does this mean they could refuse to pay out if I had a stroke on my upcoming cruise or other holidays? Should I advise them or not?

A Travel insurance can be complex, and it is essential to tell the company about any medical conditions that you have before you travel. They will then decide whether to provide cover for any medical incidents that could be linked to these, which usually involves paying an extra premium.

In some cases, though, this is usually only for very serious medical problems and they will not provide cover at all. Having a high cholesterol level is regarded as a medical condition, and if you don't tell the insurance company about it and then have a medical event that could possibly be linked to it, such as a heart attack or a stroke, then you will not be covered for it, and will have to pay any costs yourself.

Therefore, you should definitely tell the insurance company, who will almost certainly want to know your exact level, and will then adjust your premium accordingly. Apart from the travel insurance, though, I am concerned that you do not want to take a statin. That 29% figure you have been given is what medics call your Q risk score – the chance of having a heart attack or a stroke in the next 10 years, which is based on not only your cholesterol level, but also your age, weight, lifestyle and medical history. Anything above 20% is regarded as high.

So it really is important to get your cholesterol level down as much as possible, and though it is sometimes possible to lower a slightly raised level back into the normal range by diet, the best way of reducing it is with statins. I am aware there has been a lot of bad publicity around them, but the vast majority of people have no side effects from them at all, and I really would encourage you to give them a try.

Q You mentioned Raynaud's in your column last week. I've had it since I was a teenager, and my son, who is 22, has it too. Apart from wearing thick gloves and socks, is there anything that can be done about it? It makes our lives a misery at this time of year, especially my son, as he can't (or won't!) wear warm lined boots.

ANNOYING
Tickly cough

A In Raynaud's, the blood vessels in the extremities overreact to exposure to cold and go white and feel very painful. The fingers and toes are usually the worst affected, but the nose, ears and nipples may be affected too. Even mildly cool weather, or getting something out the freezer, can trigger the reaction, and in some, just a strong emotional reaction may be to blame.

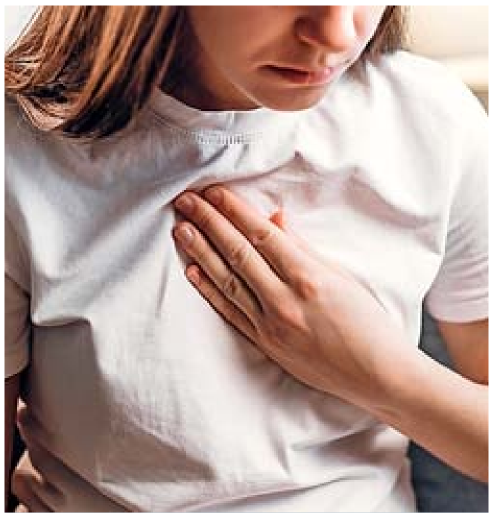
Though occasionally it can be linked to an underlying autoimmune disorder, such as rheumatoid arthritis, in most cases there is no known cause, and it usually first develops before the age of 30. It is more common in women, but men are affected too, and this is more likely if a close relative is affected, as in your family.

The main way of dealing with it is to try and keep the extremities warm by wearing thick socks and mittens (better than gloves), and footwear with a warm lining that is big enough to give the toes plenty of wriggling room. You can now buy battery heated gloves and socks, and these can be useful, especially if you are often outdoors, and these might be acceptable for your son.

Smoking makes Raynaud's worse, (another reason to stop) as can beta blocker medications, such as propranolol. For those with severe symptoms there are medicines that can help.

The most commonly used is nifedipine, but amlodipine and diltiazem can also be used to help widen small blood vessels. The antidepressant fluoxetine and sildenafil (used more commonly for erectile dysfunction) can also be helpful. They are available on prescription, but often only need to be taken during very cold weather, not all the time.

If you have a health question for Dr Leonard, email her in confidence at yourhealth@express.co.uk. Dr Leonard regrets she cannot enter into personal correspondence or reply to everyone



SIGNS HEARTBURN MAY BE SOMETHING SERIOUS

Persistent heartburn could be a sign of a more serious condition, according to NHS guidance.

Many people experience heartburn after eating large meals or consuming acidic drinks, but if you have it for longer periods of time it could signal an underlying issue.

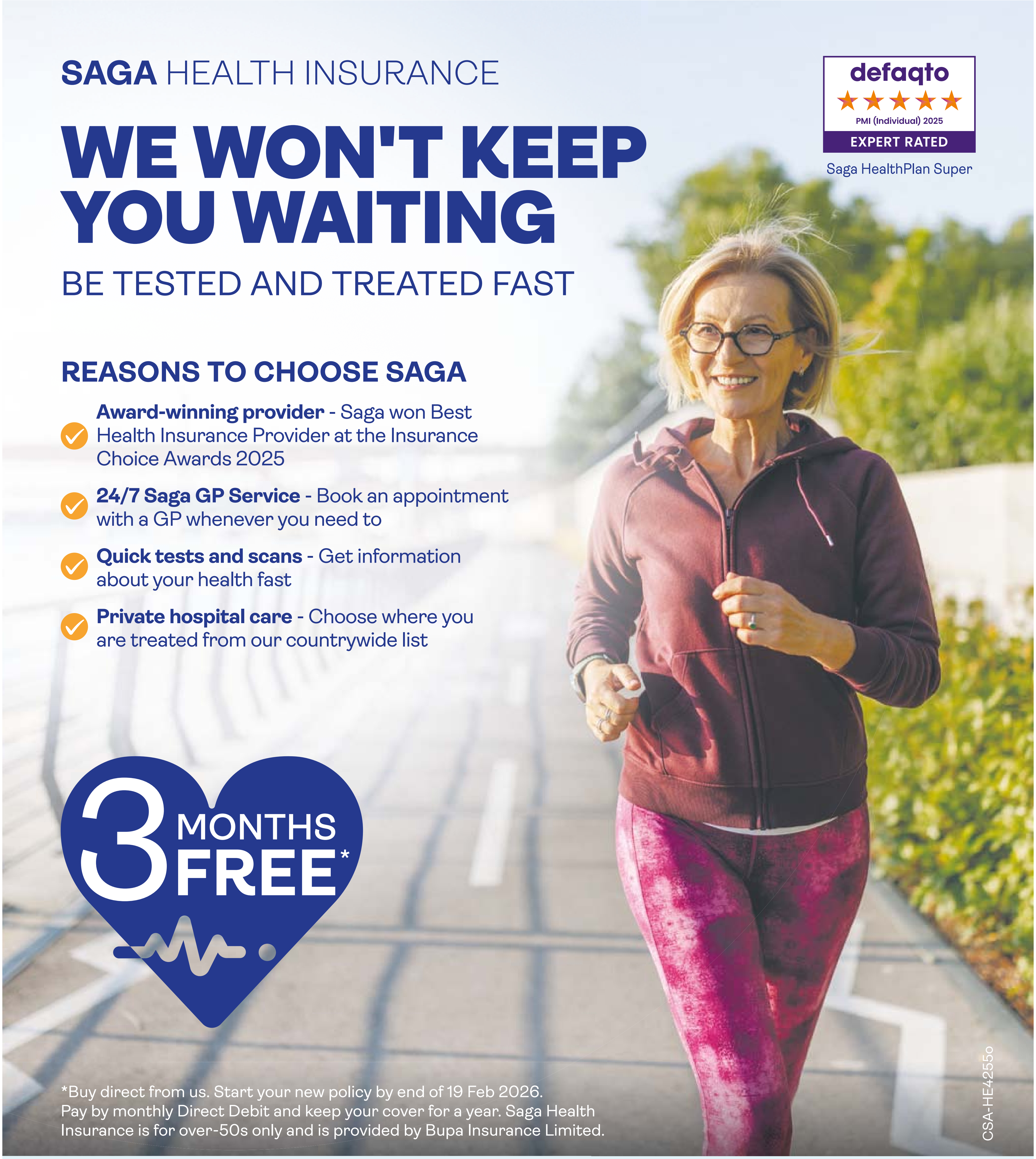
Heartburn is a burning feeling in the chest caused by stomach acid travelling up towards the throat (acid reflux). Pregnancy, stress, being overweight, smoking, an increase in certain hormones and certain medications are some of the causes.

In some cases, the cause can be a stomach ulcer or hiatus hernia, when part of the stomach moves up into the chest. In serious instances, it could be a symptom of oesophageal cancer. Those who experience symptoms may also notice difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), nausea or being sick, indigestion, and burping a lot.

The NHS lists further warning signs as a cough that doesn't get better, loss of appetite or unintentional weight loss, feeling tired, a hoarse voice, and pain in your throat or chest – especially when swallowing. Some people may also have black poo or cough up blood, but these are less common symptoms.

NHS guidance says to ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from 111 if you're being sick for more than 48 hours, if your poo is black or dark red, or if you have symptoms of oesophageal cancer.

It adds you should book in with a GP if your heartburn lasts for three weeks or more; you have a condition that causes digestion symptoms and they're not getting better with your usual treatments; you've lost a noticeable amount of weight; you have symptoms of oesophageal cancer that get worse; or you have problems swallowing.



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Meets the needs of the over 70's with Vitamins A, C, D and E

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W952	90 tabs	~~£14.99~~	£8.99
W953	180 tabs	~~£24.99~~	£14.99
W954	360 tabs	~~£39.99~~	£23.99

SAVE UP TO £22.80

Cranberry 25,000mg
Far stronger than Cranberry juice with added Vitamins C & E

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W989	90 tabs	~~£18.99~~	£9.49
W1045	180 tabs	~~£32.99~~	£16.49
W1046	360 tabs	~~£56.99~~	£28.49

BEST SELLER · SAVE UP TO £7.60

Vitamin D3 1,000iu
Contributes to the maintenance of normal bones and teeth

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W699	180 tabs	~~£11.99~~	£7.19
W700	360 tabs	~~£18.99~~	£11.39

NEW! · SAVE UP TO £8

Super Mushroom Complex
Packed with 6 mushrooms including Lions Mane.

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W1131	60 caps	~~£11.99~~	£7.19
W1132	120 caps	~~£15.99~~	£9.59
W1133	180 caps	~~£19.99~~	£11.99

HIGH STRENGTH · SAVE UP TO £12

High Strength Vitamin B12
High Strength Vitamin B12 provides 1,000µg per tablet

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W987	90 tabs	~~£9.99~~	£5.99
W1041	180 tabs	~~£16.99~~	£10.19
W1042	360 tabs	~~£29.99~~	£17.99

NEW! · SAVE UP TO £30

Marine Collagen Gold
Highest potency formula, packed with vitamins for skin, hair & nails

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W988	150 tabs	~~£24.99~~	£14.99
W1043	300 tabs	~~£41.99~~	£25.19
W1044	600 tabs	~~£74.99~~	£44.99

SAVE UP TO £18

Turmeric 500mg
Our longest selling turmeric product with quality and affordability

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W753	90 caps	~~£17.99~~	£10.79
W893	180 caps	~~£33.99~~	£20.39
W1017	360 caps	~~£44.99~~	£26.99

SAVE UP TO £17.20

Evening Primrose Oil
Packed with Gamma Linolenic Acid (GLA) for full health benefits

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W063	90 caps	~~£14.99~~	£8.99
W566	180 caps	~~£26.99~~	£16.19
W567	360 caps	~~£42.99~~	£25.79

SAVE UP TO £20

Turmeric 10,000mg
High power formula. Contains large amounts of curcumin.

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W890	60 tabs	~~£20.99~~	£12.59
W891	120 tabs	~~£36.99~~	£22.19
W892	180 tabs	~~£49.99~~	£29.99

SAVE UP TO £6.40

Zinc
Get ready for winter with Zinc to fight attacks on the immune system

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W621	90 tabs	~~£9.99~~	£5.99
W622	180 tabs	~~£11.99~~	£7.19
W623	360 tabs	~~£15.99~~	£9.59

HIGH STRENGTH · SAVE UP TO £14

Glucosamine 1,500mg
Our highest ever strength of Glucosamine Sulphate 2KCI

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W529	90 tabs	~~£14.99~~	£8.99
W530	180 tabs	~~£21.99~~	£13.19
W531	360 tabs	~~£34.99~~	£20.99

SAVE UP TO £24

Collagen
The most common protein found in skin, bones and connective tissue

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W328	90 tabs	~~£13.99~~	£11.99
W545	180 tabs	~~£23.99~~	£20.99
W771	360 tabs	~~£33.99~~	£35.99

BEST SELLER · SAVE UP TO £10

Magnesium 375mg
Formulated with Magnesium Citrate for maxium absorption

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W958	60 tabs	~~£12.99~~	£7.79
W959	120 tabs	~~£19.99~~	£11.99
W960	180 tabs	~~£24.99~~	£14.99

SAVE UP TO £12

Glucosamine, MSM Chondroitin and Vit C
Contributes to normal collagen formation in your body

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W532	90 tabs	~~£11.99~~	£7.19
W533	180 tabs	~~£21.99~~	£13.19
W534	360 tabs	~~£29.99~~	£17.99

SAVE UP TO £10

Vitamin B12 12mcg
Essential vitamin contributes to reducing tiredness and fatigue

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W779	180 tabs	~~£13.99~~	£8.39
W780	360 tabs	~~£24.99~~	£14.99

BEST SELLER · SAVE UP TO £20

Lutein & Zeaxanthin
With Astaxanthin & Vitamin B2 for the maintenance of normal vision

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W955	60 tabs	~~£24.99~~	£14.99
W956	120 tabs	~~£39.99~~	£23.99
W957	180 tabs	~~£49.99~~	£29.99

BEST SELLER · SAVE UP TO £13.60

Bowel Care Plus
Psyllium Husk, Bifibus Culture and Aloe Vera with essential vitamins

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W039	90 tabs	~~£13.99~~	£8.39
W797	180 tabs	~~£21.99~~	£13.19
W798	360 tabs	~~£33.99~~	£20.39

LOWER PRICE · SAVE UP TO £10.40

Omega 3 1,000mg
Rich in EPA & DHA for normal function of the heart, brain & vision

CODE	QTY	WAS	NOW
W499	90 caps	~~£13.99~~	£8.39
W500	180 caps	~~£20.99~~	£12.59
W501	360 caps	~~£25.99~~	£15.59

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TODAY'S TV ONES TO WATCH

by **MIKE WARD** *TV critic*

Pick of the day

CELEBRITY SAS: WHO DARES WINS C4 9PM

FIGHTING TALK *The recruits*

SAS HAVE SPECIAL K FOR BREAKFAST

NEVER in my wildest dreams did I expect to see such a thing. Never did I expect to see cricket legend Graeme "Swanny" Swann and rugby legend Ben "Coheny" Cohen competing alongside names such as Jessika Power and Axle Whitehead, as they are on this eighth series of Celebrity SAS. The main reason I didn't expect it is I haven't a clue idea who Jessika Power and Axle Whitehead actually are. Or at least I didn't before I watched last night's opening episode.

Until then, their names had prompted no reaction in me, other than (1) Why spell Jessica with a K? And (2) Who names their kid after a car part? But it turns out these people are Australians, as are seven of the 14 "recruits" on this latest series. So that's OK – in fact, quite a relief – because it means I needn't pretend to have heard of them.

So why the large contingent from Down Under? I'm really not sure, other than it presumably helps sell the show there. The full Aussie line-up includes swimmers (obviously), soap people (obviously), and a man who apparently used to play cricket (do Australians play cricket? Who knew?)

Axle, since you ask, is one of the soap people. Jessica is a "TV personality", which is telly code for: "We don't really know what this person does." I've looked for information online and she seems quite a controversial figure. "Jessika Power breaks her silence after being linked to scandal-hit Love Island bad boy," announces one exhausting headline. So she must be quite important, to have had a "silence" to "break". Have you ever "broken your silence" over anything? Me neither. I tend to just start talking.

Anyway, the challenge, as usual, is for each competitor to prove that they have SAS potential even though, let's face it, they don't.

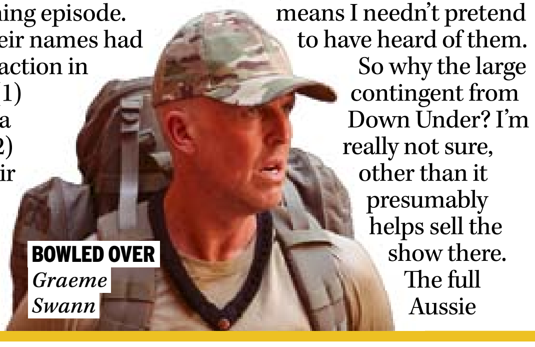
Heading into tonight's episode (challenges include crawling through a cramped, muddy tunnel while being sworn at) some are already struggling.

"Fighting is for morons," a lady once in Neighbours has insisted.

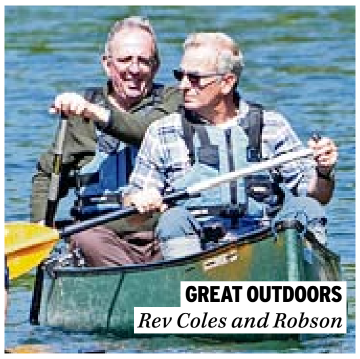
And OK, she may be right.

But if you're hoping to be accepted into the SAS, it might be worth keeping that opinion to yourself. Same as not admitting you're a vegan when you apply to run the butcher's counter at Tesco.

EXPERTS *Directing staff Rudy, Chris, Foxy and Billy*



BOWLED OVER *Graeme Swann*



GREAT OUTDOORS *Rev Coles and Robson*

ROBSON GREEN'S WEEKEND ESCAPES, BBC2, 6.30PM

ROBSON has worked with several men of the cloth, as you may be aware if you've ever watched something called ITV.

Each, funnily enough, has shown an uncanny understanding not only of the good Lord but of the criminal mind.

Hence the Rev Richard Coles, also now a bestselling crime writer, makes a fitting first companion as Robson begins series three of this outdoorsy series of his.

Activities he's lined up for his guest, as they wend their way along the Northumberland coast, include canoeing, a photography class and making funny arty things from bits of old rope. Surprisingly, though, no one gets murdered.

WELLBEING *Gemma (right) with expert Dr Jack Mosley*

PROTEIN: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW, C4, 8PM

GEMMA Atkinson isn't just an actress and TV presenter. She's also what's referred to here as a "wellbeing enthusiast", presumably to distinguish her from those of us who are enthusiastic about being ill.

Gemma has lately become aware of a growing obsession with protein, health-wise, with more and more food manufacturers cashing in.

But are they simply targeting gullible idiots who have the IQ of celery?

Those aren't her exact words, but I think I've summed up the gist of her inquiry rather neatly.

BEST FILM

THE HUNGER GAMES, BBC1, 10.40PM

The big screen version of the hit novels with Jennifer Lawrence as teen heroine Katniss, fighting for survival in a brutal tournament.

BEST SOAP

CORRIEDALE, ITV1, 8PM

The crossover episode is here, with a car crash causing Corrie and Emmerdale to collide. Watch out for an iconic moment between Ken and Eric.

BEST CRIME

LYNLEY, BBC1, 8.30PM

Sofia Barclay and Leo Suter star as East Anglia cop Barbara Havers and Oxford graduate DSI Lynley in this mismatch murder mystery.

BEST COOKING

JUNIOR BAKE OFF, CHANNEL 4, 5PM

Sixteen of Britain's most talented young bakers set out to impress judges Ravneet Gill and Liam Charles with Harry Hill as host.

TODAY'S PREVIEWS ARE ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE

FILM RATINGS

★★★★★ BRILLIANT
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ AVERAGE
★ BAD

(R) REPEAT

ALL PROGRAMMES ARE LISTED IN GREENWICH MEAN TIME (GMT).

7
8
9
10
11
12 MIDNIGHT

BBC One

6.00am Breakfast News headlines.
9.30 Morning Live Magazine.
10.45 Rip Off Britain The use of facial recognition software on Britain's high streets.
11.30 Homes Under the Hammer Property auctions. (R)
12.15pm Bargain Hunt Two sisters take on two vicars in Detling.
1.00 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 NEW **Lost and Found in the Lakes** Lost treasures are reunited with previous owners.
2.30 Animal Park The keepers protect an aging lioness before the pride turns on her.
3.00 I Escaped to the Country Revisiting buyers.
3.45 Garden Rescue Charlie Dimmock and Amelia Bouquet create a well-being garden.
4.30 NEW **The Travelling Auctioneers** James Broad and Robin Johnson help a family fund a holiday that could be their last.
5.15 Pointless With Alexander Armstrong and Judi Love.
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 Regional News; Weather

5.15pm, POINTLESS: Judi Love

7.00 The One Show Lauren Laverne and Angellica Bell present stories and chat.
7.30 EastEnders Jean's behaviour causes concern and Phil and Julie visit a care home with Nigel. Kathy gets badmouthed by a new competitor.
8.00 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back The work of trackers using hi-tech methods to hunt down stolen vehicles. (R)
8.30 NEW **Lynley** Detective drama based on Elizabeth George's novels, starring Leo Suter and Sofia Barclay. Working class East Anglian local DS Barbara Havers is paired with incoming Oxford graduate DI Thomas Lynley to solve the murder of a wealthy landowner. Suspects include members of his own family and those connected to his valuable collection of Roman antiquities.
10.00 BBC News at Ten
10.30 Regional News; Weather
10.40 FILM **The Hunger Games** (2012, 12) A totalitarian future holds an annual nationally televised event in which two children from each of its regions fight to the death until only one remains. A teenage girl takes her younger sister's place in the games and must pit her wits against the deadly combat skills of her rivals. Sci-fi adventure based on Suzanne Collins' novel, with Jennifer Lawrence. ★★★★★

12.50am Would I Lie to You? Julie Hesmondhalgh, Chris McCausland, Yinka Bokinni and Harriet Kemsley bolster the deceitful talents of team captains Lee Mack and David Mitchell. Rob Brydon hosts. (R) **1.20** Weather for the Week Ahead. The latest forecast. **1.25-6.00am** BBC News

BBC Two

6.30am Sign Zone: Antiques Roadshow: Unseen Treasures (R)
7.30 Match of the Day (R)
9.00 BBC News
12.15pm Politics Live Stories from Westminster and beyond.
1.00 Impossible Quiz. (R)
1.45 Brainbox Challenge Gameshow, hosted by Clive Anderson. (R)
2.15 The Manor Reborn The renovation of Avebury Manor in Wiltshire. (R)
3.15 Hidden Treasures of the National Trust Some of the UK's most historic homes. (R)
4.15 Madagascar David Attenborough narrates. (R)
5.15 Flog It! From Layer Marney Tower in rural Essex. (R)
6.00 Richard Osman's House of Games With Huge Davies, Amy Dowden, Humphrey Ker and Jamie-Lee O'Donnell.
6.30 NEW **Robson Green's Weekend Escapes** The Rev Richard Coles joins Robson to explore Northumberland's coastline.

9pm, VICTORIAN MURDER CLUB: Lucy Worsley

7.00 Global Eye Investigations.
7.30 Celebrity Mastermind Alexander Dragonetti, Janine Harouni, Laura Davies and Greg McHugh face questions on subterranean London, Toy Story, Steven Gerrard and the original Indiana Jones trilogy.
8.00 Only Connect The first of the semi-finals, which sees the Metrophiles and the 5Ks competing to reach the final.
8.30 University Challenge Churchill College, Cambridge takes on Merton College, Oxford. Amol Rajan hosts.
9.00 NEW **Lucy Worsley's Victorian Murder Club** The historian investigates the case of a little-known Victorian serial killer who was never caught, re-examining leads that were followed and uncovering new ones.
10.00 Mortimer & Whitehouse: Gone Fishing Paul Whitehouse and Bob Mortimer fish for chub in the Irfon and Wye rivers. The friends also meet David Lyons, the founder of charity Tackling Minds. (R)
10.30 Newsnight; Weather
11.00 Titanic Sinks Tonight Double bill. As the liner goes down fast there is a scramble for places in the remaining lifeboats and guns are handed out to the senior officers to maintain order; the last wooden lifeboat leaves and everyone faces their fates, with those on the boats making a decision to risk saving others or prioritise their own survival. Last in series. (R)

1.00am Sign Zone: Countryfile (R)
1.55 Sign Zone: The Traitors (R)
3.00-6.00am This Is BBC Two

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain A lively mix of news, current affairs and lifestyle features.
9.30 Lorraine Entertainment and the latest fashion news.
10.00 This Morning Topical daily magazine, featuring a mix of celebrity chat, showbusiness news, advice and discussion. Including Local Weather.
12.30pm Loose Women Celebrity interviews and topical debate.
1.30 ITV News; Weather
1.55 Regional News; Weather
2.00 NEW **Dickinson's Real Deal** David Dickinson and his team assess items in Nottingham, where a collection of costume jewellery turns out to be worth more than £1,000.
3.00 Time Is Money Quiz.
3.59 Regional Weather
4.00 Deal or No Deal Gameshow.
5.00 The Chase Bradley Walsh presents as Lou, Linda, Dom and Poppy take on one of the quiz experts.
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV Evening News The day's headlines; Weather

8pm, CORRIEDALE: Theo and Todd

7.00 Emmerdale A beautiful day quickly turns ominous.
7.30 Coronation Street The wedding guests prepare to leave the reception, while the bride jumps into a drunken Carl's car, and a desperate Kit and Carla head to Yorkshire.
8.00 Corriedale A crossover episode between Coronation Street and Emmerdale. Debbie Webster's dramatic wedding to Ronnie leads to a desperate, drink-fuelled Carl speeding away with Debbie in the car.
9.00 Red Eye After surviving her fight with Fox, Hana wonders why he spared her, while a clue makes Brody suspect Russia isn't behind the murders. Banks and Jess Li strike an uneasy deal and uncover evidence.
10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather
10.30 Regional News; Weather
10.45 FILM **The Goonies** (1985, 12) Seven youngsters discover an old map and set out on the adventure of a lifetime to save their homes from a land developer by finding a legendary pirate's hidden treasure. However, they first have to navigate a series of booby-trapped underground caverns and outwit a family of crooks. Family adventure, starring Sean Astin and Corey Feldman. ★★★★

12.35am Shop on TV **3.00** Riches. Following a sudden death, the estranged children of Stephen Richards return to the UK to discuss the future of the family business. Drama, starring Hugh Quarshie. (R) **3.50** Unwind with ITV **5.05-6.00am** Deal or No Deal. Gameshow. (R)

Channel 4

6.00am Cheers four episodes.. (R)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond Triple bill. (R)
9.10 Frasier Four episodes. (R)
11.10 American Pickers Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz pick over a businessman's collection. (R)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary Headlines.
12.10 Car S.O.S Tim Shaw and Fuzz Townshend restore a Porsche in terrible condition. (R)
1.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It The carcass of an old Land Rover is transformed. (R)
2.10 Countdown With Debbie McGee in Dictionary Corner.
3.00 A Place in the Sun Sara Damergi helps two best friends find a holiday home in Spain's Roquetas de Mar. (R)
4.00 NEW **A New Life in the Sun** A West Yorkshire couple become publicans in France.
5.00 NEW **Junior Bake Off** A new round of the baking contest starts with cake week.
6.00 A Place in the Sun Jasmine Harman goes house-hunting on the eastern Costa del Sol.

8pm, PROTEIN: EVERYTHING YOU…: Jack and Gemma

7.00 Channel 4 News A round-up of all the latest headlines, in-depth interviews and analysis of political developments and current affairs. Plus, the day's leading sports stories and up-to-the-minute weather reports.
8.00 Protein: Everything You Need to Know Gemma Atkinson discusses the consumer health obsession surrounding protein, to investigate what's really in protein-heavy products, how much is actually needed.
9.00 Celebrity SAS: Who Dares Wins Phase two begins with Billy determined to understand his recruits inside out. With insight from Dr Gareth and a rare glimpse into Billy's own past, the recruits quickly learn what's expected of them.
10.00 First Dates Beach Club Lauren from Newcastle begins the hunt for her 'wifey for lifey'. But when a love triangle forms, she's left wondering whether her heart is in the right place. Shanae has plenty to say about Jacques, which gives Sami food for thought. Will reflection lead to romance or retreat?
11.05 Gogglebox Festive Special 2025 As the Goggleboxers hang up their Christmas stockings, a bumper edition of the show takes a merry look back at the best of 2025. (R)

12.30am Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA (R) **1.20** 2025: The Year from Space (R) **2.45** Judi Dench: Shakespeare, My Family and Me (R) **3.40** Couples Come Dine with Me (R) **4.35** Jamie's One-Pan Wonders (R) **5.00** Hollyoaks Omnibus (R) **5.45-6.25am** Countdown (R)

5

6.00am Milkshake! Children's TV.
9.15 Jeremy Vine Discussion.
11.30 NEW **Storm & Alexis** Storm Huntley is joined by new co-host Alexis Conran for discussion and debate on the day's biggest stories.
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 NEW **Matt Allwright** Debate on the day's biggest stories, and consumer advice to help viewers save money.
2.00 Vanessa Discussion show, presented by Vanessa Feltz.
3.00 The Madame Blanc Mysteries Antiques dealer Jean White finds her life turned upside down. (R)
4.00 Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun Dave swaps van snacks for exercise to shed two stone before wife Sam's baby reveal, while Troy and Nikki surprise Tammy with a marina party and framed memories.
5.00 5 News at 5 Headlines.
6.00 Secrets of the Royal Palaces The royal family's race to be by Elizabeth II's side. (R); 5 News Update

9pm, MURDER SUSPECT NO 1: Lancashire detectives

7.00 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders Sgt Dave Roberts races to the scene when a child is knocked off his bike by a car outside a school in Gateshead, but the wait time for an ambulance is three hours (R); 5 News Update
8.00 Police Interceptors Richie pursues a vehicle suspected of being involved in organised crime, while four masked criminals attempting to rob a container in a storage facility are disturbed by two cops.
9.00 NEW **Murder Suspect No 1** Documentary following homicide investigations, beginning with the case of a man beaten to death in a basement squat in the early hours of the morning in Lancashire.
10.00 Forensics: Crash Scene Investigators The work of North Yorkshire's forensic collision investigators. A man is killed after being thrown from his car and a stranded motorist is hit from behind by a van. (R)
11.05 Traffic Cops Derbyshire officers battle a surge in car crime across the East Midlands and South Yorkshire, with 10 police units from two forces pursuing a gang of suspected car thieves stealing high-powered vehicles. (R)

12.05am Police Interceptors (R) **1.00** PlayOJO Live Casino Show **3.00** Your Dream Kitchen for Less (R) **3.50** World's Most Scenic River Journeys (R) **4.35** The Wonderful World of Chocolate (R) **5.25** Entertainment News on 5 **5.35** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom (R) **5.45-6.00am** Milo (R)

ITV2 FREEVIEW 6

6.00am CITV **7.30** Buying the View **7.55** Celebrity Dinner Date **9.00** Olivia and Alex: Parenthood **10.05** Real Housewives and the Menopause **12.05pm** Dinner Date **1.05** Celebrity Dinner Date **2.05** The Only Way Is Essex **3.05** Celebrity Dinner Date **4.10** The Real Housewives of Miami **5.00** The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills

6.00 Celebrity Catchphrase With James Jordan, Fiona Wade and Louis Walsh.

7.00 Deal or No Deal Ellie joins Stephen Mulhern and gets her chance to open the iconic red boxes in the gameshow revival.

8.00 The Real Housewives of Orange County Alexis revels in her relationship with an ex-boyfriend of Shannon's.

9.00 The 1% Club Quiz, with Lee Mack.

10.00 Family Guy Triple bill.

11.30 American Dad! Double bill.

12.25am Bob's Burgers **1.25** Olivia Attwood's Bad Boyfriends **2.25** Unwind with ITV **3.00-6.00am** Teleshopping

U&Dave FREEVIEW 19

6.00am Teleshopping **7.20** James May's Things You Need to Know **7.45** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **9.40** Guy Martin: Last Flight of the Vulcan Bomber **11.00** Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey **12.00noon** Border Force: America's Gatekeepers **2.00** Robson's Extreme Fishing Challenge **3.00** Top Gear **5.00** Hairy Bikers' Best of British

6.00 Rick Stein's Far Eastern Odyssey

7.00 Would I Lie to You? With Dara O Briain and Denise Van Outen.

7.40 Richard Osman's House of Games

9.00 QI XL With Nabil Abdulrashid, Joe Lycett, Lou Sanders and Alan Davies.

10.00 Have I Got a Bit More News for You

11.00 Taskmaster Alex Horne and Noel Fielding dance like a pair of shrews.

12.00m't Would I Lie to You? at Christmas **12.40** Mock the Week **1.20** Would I Lie to You? **2.00** Australian Ninja Warrior **3.25** Meet the Richardsons **4.00-6.00am** Teleshopping

E4 FREEVIEW 13

6.00am Hollyoaks **6.55** Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **7.00** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **9.00** The Goldbergs **10.00** The Simpsons **11.00** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA **1.00pm** The Simpsons **3.00** The Goldbergs **4.00** Modern Family **5.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine

6.00 The Simpsons Double bill.

7.00 Hollyoaks The Osbornes and Hutchinsons put past feuds behind them.

7.30 The Simpsons Homer is cast as the lead in a superhero movie.

8.00 First Dates Twenty-nine-year-old Georgina returns to the dating scene.

9.00 Gogglebox Double bill. Opinions on Casualty and Queer Eye; critiquing Sitting on a Fortune and Britain's Got Talent.

11.05 Open House: The Great Sex Experiment A look at whether relationships need monogamy to thrive.

12.05am Naked Attraction **1.10** First Dates **2.10** Gogglebox **4.00** The Goldbergs **4.50-6.00am** Don't Tell the Bride

ITVQuiz FREEVIEW 28

9.00am Deal or No Deal **10.00** Tipping Point **1.00pm** Lingo **2.00** Tenable **3.00** Beat the Chasers **4.00** Riddiculous **5.00** Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts as contestants take on the Banker.

6.00 Lingo Triple bill. Adil Ray hosts the game in which three pairs of contestants use their skills to find words from the fewest letters possible.

9.00 Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow – Celebrity Special The comedian hosts a star-studded version of Play Your Cards Right, with couples including Harry and Sandra Redknapp, and Martin and Shirlie Kemp taking part to be in with a chance of winning the jackpot for charity.

10.00 Tipping Point Triple bill. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz show in which four players take on an extraordinary machine in the hope of winning the £10,000 jackpot.

12.55am Tenable **1.50** Unwind with ITV **2.00-9.00am** Teleshopping

U&Drama FREEVIEW 20

7.25am At Home with the Braithwaites **8.20** Doctors **9.35** Classic Holby City **10.40** Classic Casualty **11.45** The Bill **12.50pm** Classic EastEnders **2.05** All Creatures Great and Small **3.05** Howards' Way **4.20** Bergerac **5.25** One Foot in the Grave

6.00 To the Manor Born Audrey reluctantly moves out of Grantleigh Manor.

6.40 Last of the Summer Wine Double bill.

8.00 Judge John Deed Jo prosecutes an MP charged with attempted murder, but Deed discovers Row Colemore is part of a conspiracy to acquit the accused and sets about exposing his friend.

10.00 New Tricks The team re-examines the case of a writer found dead in a scrapyard, and Brian believes the secret of the murder lies in the man's poetry.

11.20 Waking the Dead Part one of two. A Sudanese politician goes on hunger strike.

12.40am Hotel Portofino **1.50** One Foot in the Grave **2.25** The Brokenwood Mysteries **4.00-6.00am** Teleshopping

More4 FREEVIEW 18

8.55am Find It, Fix It, Flog It **10.00** A Place in the Sun **11.30** Come Dine with Me: five episodes **2.10pm** Four in a Bed: five episodes **4.50** A Place in the Sun: Home or Away **5.55** Car S.O.S

6.55 Car S.O.S Tim and Fuzz work on restoring an iconic BMW E30 Alpina.

7.55 The Dog House A cheeky Jack Russell seeks a new home after his owner became unwell. Attempts are made to pair Staffordshire bull terrier Gloria with a woman who has suffered a break-up.

9.00 Supercruising: Life at Sea The MS Nieuw Statendam's crew readies to set sail from Fort Lauderdale on a two-week voyage around the Caribbean.

10.00 24 Hours in A&E Double bill. A woman is brought in after being run over by a lorry; a 36-year-old man is involved in a high-speed road traffic collision.

12.05am Emergency Helicopter Medics **1.05** 24 Hours in A&E: double bill **3.20-3.45am** Food Unwrapped

Variations & S4C

WALES As BBC1 except: 1.35-1.45pm BBC Wales Today; Weather **6.30** BBC Wales Today; Weather **7.00-7.30** NEW Bear Grylls: Wild Reckoning **8.00-8.30** Our Lives: Guardian of the Night **10.30** BBC Wales Today; Weather **10.40** Dating Apps: The Inside Story **11.35** FILM The Hunger Games (2012, 12)★★★★★ **1.45-6.00am** BBC News

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WALES As BBC2 except: 7.00-7.30pm The One Show. Presented by Lauren Laverne.

MERIDIAN As ITV1 except: 1.55-2.00pm ITV News Meridian; Weather **6.00-6.30** ITV News Meridian. Headlines; Weather **10.30-10.45pm** ITV News Meridian; Weather

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CENTRAL As ITV1 except: 1.55-2.00pm ITV News Central; Weather **6.00-6.30** ITV News Central. Headlines; Weather **10.30-10.45pm** ITV News Central; Weather

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ITV WALES As ITV1 except: 1.55-2.00pm ITV News Cymru Wales; Weather **6.00-6.30** ITV News Cymru Wales; Weather **10.30-10.45pm** ITV News Cymru Wales. Headlines; Weather

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WEST As ITV1 except: 1.55-2.00pm ITV News West Country; Weather **6.00-6.30** ITV News West Country; Weather **10.30-10.45pm** ITV News West Country. Headlines; Weather

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ANGLIA As ITV1 except: 1.55-2.00pm ITV News Anglia; Weather **6.00-6.30** ITV News Anglia. Headlines; Weather **10.30-10.45pm** ITV News Anglia; Weather

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WESTCOUNTRY As ITV1 except: 1.55-2.00pm ITV News West Country; Weather **6.00-6.30** ITV News West Country; Weather **10.30-10.45pm** ITV News West Country

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S4C 6.00am Cyw **12.00noon** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd **12.05pm** Sain Ffagan **12.30** Heno **1.00** Jason Mohammad: Stadiymau'r Byd **2.00** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd **2.05** Prynhawn Da **3.00** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd **3.05** Mari Grug: Un Dydd ar y Tro **4.00** Awr Fawr **5.00** Stwnsh **6.00** Cartrefi Cymru **6.30** Rownd a Rownd **6.57** Newyddion S4C **7.00** Heno **7.30** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd **8.00** NEW Gwlad y Basg: Gwilym Bowen Rhys. The history, language, music and culture of various overseas destinations. **8.25** Rhys Patchell: Japan a'r Gic Olaf **8.55** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd **9.00** Cefn Gwlad **10.00** Sgorio **10.30** Y Cyfweliad **11.05-11.40pm** Dim Cwsg i Quinnell

BBC3 FREEVIEW 23

7.00pm The Catch Up

7.05 SpongeBob SquarePants Double bill of underwater adventures in the city of Bikini Bottom

7.30 Top Gear Africa Special – Part One Part one of two. A search for the source of the Nile in Africa.

8.30 Top Gear Africa Special – Part Two The quest to find the source of the River Nile concludes.

9.30 Movies with Ali Plumb Tom Cruise discusses the Mission: Impossible movies.

10.00 FILM **Mission: Impossible** (1996, PG) A secret agent is accused of betraying his fellow spies, and sets out on a mission to clear his name. Action thriller based on the 1960s TV series, starring Tom Cruise and Jon Voight. ★★★★

11.45 The Fast and the Farmer-ish: seven episodes **3.15-4.00am** Stacey Dooley: Meet the Shoplifters

BBC4 FREEVIEW 9

7.00pm Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise The culture of the nation.

8.00 Pavlopetri – The City Beneath the Waves Investigating the world's oldest submerged city.

9.00 Call My Bluff With Patrick Mower, Russell Harty, Nanette Newman and Gabrielle Drake.

9.30 Face the Music With Joyce Grenfell and David Attenborough.

10.00 Frank Gehry: The Architect Says 'Why Can't I?' – Imagine A 2015 profile of the architect.

11.10 Frank Gehry: Masterbuilders A 1993 profile of the architect.

11.55 The Brits Who Designed the Modern World Profiles of 10 celebrated British designers.

12.55am Ian Rankin Investigates: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde **1.55** Pavlopetri – The City Beneath the Waves **2.55-3.55am** Thailand: Earth's Tropical Paradise

GB News FREEVIEW 236

6.00am Breakfast with Eamonn and Ellie **9.30** Britain's Newsroom **12.00noon** Good Afternoon Britain **3.00** Martin Daubney. Updates.

6.00 Dewbs & Co Plain-speaking, straight-talking – Michelle Dewberry delivers her take on the day's news.

7.00 Farage An action-packed hour of topical discussion and debate.

8.00 Jacob Rees-Mogg's State Of The Nation Join Jacob for his unique and unmissable take on the news.

9.00 Patrick Christys Tonight Replay Spirited debate and interviews.

11.00 Patrick Christys Tonight Late Edition All the major stories making the front pages and full coverage of all the breaking news at home and abroad with Patrick Christys.

12.00m't The Late Show Live **2.00** Farage Replay **3.00** Patrick Christys Tonight Replay **5.00-6.00am** Patrick Christys Tonight Late Edition

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Sport

SKY SPORTS MAIN EVENT

6.00am LIVE **Tennis** Action from the WTA and ATP Tours, including the United Cup Tennis tournament, WTA Brisbane Open, WTA Auckland Open, ATP Brisbane Open, and ATP Hong Kong Open.

9.00 LIVE **United Cup Tennis** Coverage of the mixed-gender team tournament in Australia.

3.30pm LIVE **SA20** Pretoria Capitals v Sunrisers Eastern Cape. Coverage from SuperSport Park.

7.00 The Transfer Show. The latest headlines.

7.30 LIVE **EFL** Leicester City v West Bromwich Albion (kick-off 8.00pm). Coverage of the Championship match at King Power Stadium.

10.30pm-6.00am LIVE **Tennis** Action from the WTA and ATP Tours, including the United Cup Tennis tournament, WTA Brisbane Open, ATP Brisbane Open, and ATP Hong Kong Open.

SKY SPORTS CRICKET

6.00am Big Bash League **7.00** Best of J Anderson: 500th Wicket **7.10** Big Bash League

8.10 LIVE **Big Bash League** Sydney Sixers v Brisbane Heat. Coverage of the T20 match.

11.30 Best of England v South Africa **11.45** Best of ICC WT20 **12.00noon** SA20 **2.00** Big Bash League **3.00** Best of J Anderson: 500th Wicket **3.10** Best of Sky Cricket

3.20 LIVE **SA20** Pretoria Capitals v Sunrisers Eastern Cape. Coverage from SuperSport Park.

7.00 Big Bash League **8.00** SA20 **9.00** SA20 **10.00** Big Bash League **11.00** Big Bash League

2.20am Best of J Anderson **2.30** Best of England v South Africa **2.45** Best of ICC WT20 **3.00** Big Bash League **4.00-6.00am** SA20

SKY SPORTS FOOTBALL

6.00am EFL League One Goals **6.30** EFL League Two Goals **7.00** EFL Highlights **9.00** SPFL Round-Up **9.15** SPFL Highlights **10.00** EFL League One Goals **10.30** EFL League Two Goals **11.00** EFL Highlights

12.00noon EFL **2.00** SPFL Round-Up **2.15** SPFL Highlights **2.45** EFL Highlights **4.30** SPFL Round-Up **4.45** SPFL Highlights **5.15** EFL Highlights **6.15** SPFL Round-Up **6.30** EFL League One Goals **7.00** EFL League Two Goals

7.30 LIVE **EFL** Leicester City v West Bromwich Albion (kick-off 8.00pm).

10.30 EFL League One Goals **11.00** EFL League Two Goals **11.30** EFL Greatest Games

12.00m't EFL Cup Retro **2.00** Best Scottish Premiership Goals 2022/23 **2.30** Best Scottish Premiership Goals 2023/24 **3.00** EFL Greatest Games **4.00** Championship Season Review **5.00** EFL Cup Highlights **5.30-6.00am** EFL

SKY SPORTS GOLF

6.00am The Open – Official Films **5.00pm** TGL **7.00** The Open – Official Films **8.00** Junior Golf **8.30** Rory's 2025 **10.00** The Open – Official Films **11.00pm-6.00am** The Open – Official Films

TNT SPORTS 1

7.30am TNT Sports Cricket Reload

8.00 LIVE **Isuzu UTE A-League** Coverage of Macarthur FC v Auckland FC (kick-off 8.00am).

10.00 The Ashes **11.00** The Football Archives: UEFA Champions League **12.00noon** UEFA Champions League – Stories of the Finals **12.15** TNT Sports Reload **12.45** Ski Jumping

1.15 LIVE **Ski Jumping World Cup** Coverage of day one of the women's HS98 in the latest meeting of the season from Villach, Austria.

3.00 No Filter Rugby. England v New Zealand.

3.15 LIVE **Ski Jumping World Cup** Four Hills qualifying from Bischofshofen, Austria.

4.45 UEFA Champions League – Stories of the Finals **5.00** Premier League Review

6.00 LIVE **Ultimate Pool** Coverage of Group One.

9.30 TNT Sports Cricket Reload **9.45** TNT Sports Cricket Reload **10.00** The Ashes

11.00pm-7.30am LIVE **The Ashes Live** Australia v England. Coverage of day three.

TNT SPORTS 2

6.00am Premier League Review **7.00** Serie A **9.00** Premier League **10.30** Premier League – The Big Interview **11.00** Premier League Stories **11.30** Premier League Legends

12.00noon Premier League Review **1.00** The Ashes **2.00** Serie A **4.00** Isuzu UTE A-League **5.00** UIM F1H2O World Championship Highlights **5.30** The Ashes **6.30** Premier League **8.00** Isuzu UTE A-League **9.00** Fishing: On the Bank **10.00** Ninja A-League Women Highlights **10.30** Premier League Stories **11.00** Premier League Netbusters **11.30** Isuzu UTE A-League

12.00m't Ninja A-League Women Highlights **12.30** Kenny Allstar's Number 1's **1.00** Isuzu UTE A-League **2.00** Isuzu UTE A-League **3.00** Isuzu UTE A-League **4.00** Isuzu UTE A-League **5.00-6.00am** Isuzu UTE A-League

BEST OF THE REST – LIVE SPORT

6.00am LIVE **Tennis** All the latest action from the WTA and ATP Tours. (Sky Sports +)

5.15pm LIVE **Live: Baller League** Coverage from the six-a-side football league. (Sky Sports +)

12.00m't LIVE **NBA Basketball** Detroit Pistons v New York Knicks (Tip-off 12.00m't). Coverage from Little Caesars Arena. (Sky Sports +)

3.00 LIVE **NBA Basketball** Los Angeles Clippers v Golden State Warriors (Tip-off 3.00am). Coverage from Intuit Dome. (Sky Sports +)

5.30-6.00am LIVE **Tennis** All the latest action from the WTA and ATP Tours. (Sky Sports +)

Entertainment & Factual

ITV3 Freeview 10

6.00am Never the Twain **7.05** On the Buses **8.10** George and Mildred **9.10** Inspector Morse **11.25** Agatha Christie's Marple **3.30pm** Classic Emmerdale **4.40** Classic Coronation Street **5.50** Heartbeat. Rural drama series. **8.00** Agatha Christie's Poirot **10.00** Foyle's War **11.55** Trial & Retribution **2.00-2.30am** Unwind with ITV

ITV4 Freeview 26

6.00am The Big Match Revisited **8.05** English Football League Highlights **9.35** The Protectors **10.10** Boon **11.20** The Professionals **12.20pm** Robin of Sherwood **1.35** Magnum, PI **2.35** Kojak **3.40** Boon **4.50** The Professionals **5.55** Minder **7.00** American Pickers **8.00** The Motorbike Show. Henry Cole goes green-laning in Oxfordshire. **9.00** FILM Rambo: First Blood Part II (1985/15) John Rambo returns to the jungles of Vietnam on a mission to rescue American PoWs and exact a violent revenge. Action adventure sequel, with Sylvester Stallone. ★★★ **11.05** Lost **12.50am** Minder **2.40** Unwind with ITV **3.00** Teleshopping **3.30-4.00am** Motorsport Mundial

5STAR Freeview 32

8.00am Bargain Brits on Benefits **10.00** 22 Kids & Counting: Noel's Long-Lost Mum **11.00** Traffic Cops **2.00pm** Police Interceptors **5.00** Call the Bailiffs: Time to Pay Up **6.00** Home and Away **7.00** GPs: Behind Closed Doors **8.00** Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts **9.00** Ambulance: Code Red. Medical documentary. **10.00** Surgeons: A Matter of Life or Death **11.00** Skin A&E **12.00m't** Cause of Death **1.00** GPs: Behind Closed Doors **2.00** The Good Wife **3.35-4.00am** Car Pound Cops

REALLY Freeview 17

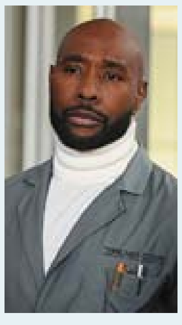
6.00am Fantasy Homes by the Sea **7.00** Cruise TV with LoveitBookit **8.00** Escape to the Country **9.00** Salvage Hunters **12.00noon** Antiques Road Trip **2.00** The Repair Shop **3.00** Celebrity Yorkshire Auction House **4.00** Long Lost Family **5.00** A Place in the Sun **6.00** Salvage Hunters **8.00** Antiques Road Trip **9.00** Angus Ashworth: Yorkshire Heritage Hero. Angus Ashworth discovers a treasure trove of wartime relics. **10.00** The Yorkshire Auction House **11.00** Celebrity Help! My House Is Haunted **2.00am** Teleshopping **4.00-6.00am** Salvage Hunters

5ACTION Freeview 33

9.00am Entertainment News on 5 **9.10** Winter Road Rescue **9.45** Police Interceptors **11.50** FILM The Fighting Kentuckian (1949/U) ★★★ **1.55** FILM Dallas (1950/U) Western, starring Gary Cooper. ★★ **4.00** The Motorway **5.00** Traffic Cops **6.00** Police Interceptors **8.00** Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders **9.00** Soldier: For King and Country **10.00** Warship: Life at Sea **11.05** Banged Up Abroad **12.05am** World's Deadliest Weather: Caught on Camera **1.10** Ice Road Truckers **2.05-4.00am** Trucking Hell

SKY ARTS Freeview 36

6.00am LSO: Rattle Conducts Sibelius & Bruckner **7.50** The Joy of Painting **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** The Directors **12.00noon** Discovering: Frances McDormand **1.00** Tales of the Unexpected **2.00** Stories from the National Portrait Gallery **3.00** Battle of the Bagpipes **4.00** The Directors **5.00** Discovering: Meg Ryan **6.00** Tales of the Unexpected **7.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.00** Andre Rieu: 70 Years Young **10.50** Notre-Dame: The Renaissance **12.25am** Bryn Terfel: Celtic Beethoven **1.50** Jacqueline du Pre: Genius and Tragedy **3.45** Opera North's Resonance **4.00** Inside Art Special: Alberta Whittle at Venice Biennale **4.30** Inside Art: Barbara Hepworth **5.00-6.00am** The Art of Architecture



Watson

Sky Witness, 9pm

John (Morris Chestnut, left) and the team are faced with an impossible choice when two lives hang in the balance. Then, as Shinwell races to help the team, John finally confronts his nemesis Moriarty.

U&GOLD

7.40am Ever Decreasing Circles **8.15** The Green Green Grass **8.55** The Thin Blue Line **9.35** Are You Being Served? **10.15** Open All Hours **10.55** Keeping Up Appearances **11.30** Last of the Summer Wine **12.50pm** The Green Green Grass **1.30** Ever Decreasing Circles **2.05** The Thin Blue Line **2.45** Are You Being Served? **3.25** Open All Hours **4.00** Ever Decreasing Circles **4.40** Last of the Summer Wine **6.00** Keeping Up Appearances **6.40** Open All Hours **7.20** Dad's Army **8.00** The Good Life **9.55** Not Going Out **10.35** The Good Life **12.30am** Not Going Out **1.10** The Good Life **3.00-4.00am** Keeping Up Appearances

U&YESTERDAY Freeview 27

6.10am Great Coastal Railway Journeys **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics **10.00** The Great War in Numbers **11.00** Adolf Hitler's War **12.00noon** Antiques Roadshow **2.00** Bangers & Cash **4.00** The Great War in Numbers **5.00** Adolf Hitler's War **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** Great Canal Journeys **8.00** Mediterranean with Simon Reeve. From Libya, Tunisia and Sicily. **9.00** Russia with Simon Reeve **10.00** Bangers & Cash **11.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics **1.00am** Abandoned Engineering **2.00-3.00am** The Great War in Numbers

U&ALIBI

7.15am Murdoch Mysteries **9.00** Father Brown **10.00** The Mentalist **11.00** Hudson & Rex **12.00noon** Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries **1.00** Death in Paradise **2.00** Murdoch Mysteries **4.00** The Mentalist **5.00** Hudson & Rex **6.00** Father Brown **7.00** Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries **8.00** Death in Paradise **10.00** Father Brown **12.00m't** So Help Me Todd **1.00** Death in Paradise **2.00-4.00am** Murdoch Mysteries

SKY MAX

6.00am Hawaii Five-0 **8.00** The 00s: Cinema's Greatest Decade **9.00** Stargate SG-1 **11.00** SEAL Team **12.00noon** The Flash **1.00** Hawaii Five-0 **3.00** S.W.A.T **4.00** NCIS: Los Angeles **5.00** SEAL Team **6.05** Stargate SG-1 **8.15** Never Mind the Buzzcocks **9.00** Rob & Romesh vs Shakespeare **10.00** An Idiot Abroad **11.00** Fear the Walking Dead **12.00m't** Mr Bigstuff **1.00** The Force: Manchester **2.00** Brit Cops: Frontline Crime UK **3.00** S.W.A.T **4.00** NCIS: Los Angeles **5.00-6.00am** Highway Patrol

SKY ATLANTIC

6.00am Fish Town **7.00** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets **8.00** Boardwalk Empire **10.15** The Sopranos **12.15pm** Game of Thrones **2.20** The Wire **4.30** Westworld **5.40** Deadwood **6.50** Game of Thrones **9.00** House of the Dragon **11.30** Deadwood **12.40am** All Her Fault **2.40** Game of Thrones **5.00-6.00am** The Guest Wing

SKY WITNESS

6.00am UK Border Force **7.00** Nothing to Declare **8.00** Border Patrol **9.00** Stop, Search, Seize **10.00** Nothing to Declare UK **11.00** A1: Britain's Longest Road **12.00noon** FBI **1.00** The Rookie **2.00** Send in the Dogs **3.00** Caught on Dashcam **4.00** Nothing to Declare **7.00** Police 24/7 **8.00** Law & Order: Criminal Intent **9.00** Watson **10.00** Blue Bloods **11.00** The Rookie **12.00m't** Law & Order: Criminal Intent **1.00** FBI **2.00** FBI: Most Wanted **3.00** Caught on Dashcam **4.00** Stop, Search, Seize **5.00-6.00am** Road Wars

SKY COMEDY

8.00am Will & Grace **9.00** Ballers **10.15** Sex and the City **11.30** Entourage **12.30pm** Will & Grace **1.30** Sex and the City **2.40** Ballers **3.50** And Just Like That **4.45** The Office (US) **5.45** Will & Grace **6.45** Community **7.45** Sex and the City **9.00** Paul Chowdhry: Live Innit **10.15** And Just Like That **11.10** Community **12.10am** Entourage **1.15** Ballers **2.30** Curb Your Enthusiasm **3.45-5.00am** Silicon Valley

DISCOVERY

6.00am How Do They Do It? **7.00** Junkyard Empire **9.00** Gold Rush **11.00** Kindig Customs **1.00pm** Deadliest Catch **3.00** How Do They Do It? **5.00** Alaska: Homestead Rescue **7.00** Wheeler Dealers World Tour **8.00** Scrapyard Dynasty **9.00** Secrets Underground **10.00** Salvage Dawgs **11.00** Deadliest Catch **1.00am** Secrets Underground **2.00** Salvage Dawgs **3.00** Gold Divers **4.00-5.00am** Moonshiners

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

8.00am Megafactories **9.00** Air Crash Investigation: Special Report **10.00** Incas: The Rise and Fall **11.00** WW2: Hell Under the Sea **12.00noon** World War II: The Apocalypse **1.00** Air Crash Investigation **3.00** Hitler's Last Stand **4.00** Drain the Oceans: Rise of the Roman Empire **5.00** Ice Road Rescue **6.00** Nazi Megastructures **7.00** Air Crash Investigation **8.00** Car S.O.S **10.00** Construction Fails **11.00** Air Crash Investigation **12.00m't** Car S.O.S **1.00** To Catch a Smuggler **2.30** Lords of War **3.20** Food Factory **4.10-5.00am** Exotic Animal ER: Double Dose

Radio

BBC RADIO 1

97.6-99.8MHz 6.58am Newsbeat **7.00** Greg James **10.30** Newsbeat **10.33** Rickie, Melvin and Charlie **12.45pm** Newsbeat **1.00** Nat and Vicky **3.30** Newsbeat **3.33** Going Home with Katie and Jerry **5.45** Newsbeat **6.00** Jack Saunders **8.00** Radio 1's Future Artists with Sian Eleri **10.00** Radio 1's Power Down Playlist with Sian Eleri **11.00** Rock Show with Daniel P Carter **1.00am** BBC Introducing Rock on Radio 1 with Alyx Holcombe **2.00** Radio 1 Anthems **4.00** Radio 1 Pop Anthems **5.00-6.58am** Radio 1 Early Breakfast with Lauren Layfield

BBC RADIO 2

88-91MHz 6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00noon** Tina Daheley **2.00** Trevor Nelson **4.00** Mark Goodier **6.30** Mark Goodier's Half Wower **7.00** Edith Bowman's Shiny Happy Playlist **7.30** Edith Bowman **9.00** The Blues Show with Cerys Matthews **10.00** The Good Groove with Melvin Odoom **12.00m't** OJ Borg **2.30** One Hit Wonders with OJ Borg **3.00** Sounds of the 90s with Fearne Cotton **4.00-6.30am** Owain Wyn Evans

BBC RADIO 3

90.2-92.4MHz 6.30am Breakfast **9.30** Essential Classics **1.00pm** Classical Live **4.00** Composer of the Week: Copland **5.00** In Tune **7.00** Classical Mixtape **7.30** Radio 3 in Concert **9.45** The Essay: Instrumental **10.00** Night Tracks **11.30** 'Round Midnight **12.30-6.30am** Through the Night

CHOICE

Book Of The Week: Overwhelmed
Monday-Friday, Radio 4,
11.45am & 12.30am

We are all familiar with the unsettling sensation of overwhelm – there's ever more to do and ever less time in which to do it. All this week author Claudia Hammond is reading from her book which claims to "give you the tools to take on everything life throws at you".

BBC RADIO 4

FM 92.4-94.6MHz 6.00am Today **9.00** More or Less: The Stats of the Nation **9.30** The Frozen Light **10.00** Woman's Hour **11.00** What Happened to Progress? **11.45** Book of the Week: Overwhelmed **12.00noon** News **12.04** You and Yours **12.57** Weather **1.00** The World at One **1.45** Human Intelligence **2.00** The Archers **2.15** Disordered **2.45** Opening Lines **3.00** Great Lives **3.30** You're Dead to Me **4.00** Highways to Hell. Why roadworks now disrupt travel in the UK so often. **4.30** Soul Music. **5.00** PM **5.57** Weather **6.00** News **6.30** The Unbelievable Truth **7.00** The Archers **7.15** Front Row **8.00** Anti-Building with Cedric Price **8.30** BBC Inside Science **9.00** The Smuggler **10.00** The World Tonight **10.45** Book at Bedtime: The Wedding Suit **11.00** Wild Inside **11.30** Today in Parliament **12.00m't** News **12.30** Book of the Week: Overwhelmed **12.48** Shipping Forecast **1.00** As World Service **5.00** News Summary **5.04** Yesterday in Parliament **5.32** Weather **5.34** Shipping Forecast **5.43** Prayer for the Day **5.45-6.00am** Farming Today

BBC RADIO 5 LIVE

693/909kHz 6.00am 5 Live Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Naga Munchetty **2.00pm** Matt Chorley **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** The Monday Night Club **9.00** 5 Live Sport **10.00** Tony Livesey **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo **5.00-6.00am** Wake Up to Money

BBC RADIO WALES

FM: 94.6MHz 6.00am Radio Wales News Update **6.05** Wake Up with Radio Wales **6.31** Steve: A Strange Life **7.00** Radio Wales Breakfast **9.00** Bronwen Lewis **11.59** The Phone In **2.00pm** Behnaz Akhgar **5.00** Radio Wales Drive **6.30** Can I Believe My Eyes? **7.00** Huw Stephens **10.00** Eleri Sion **12.00m't** Relax with Radio Wales **1.00-6.00am** As Radio 5 Live

CLASSIC FM

100-102MHz 6.30am Classic FM Breakfast **9.00** The Classic FM Hall of Fame **10.00** Alexander Armstrong **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00-6.30am** Early Breakfast

ABSOLUTE RADIO

DAB 6.00am Dave Berry **10.00** Leona Graham **1.00pm** Ben Burrell **4.00** Bush and Richie **7.00** Danielle Perry **10.00** Jay Lawrence **1.00-6.00am** Dan Noble

Movies

FILM4

11.00am Jubal (1956/PG) Western, starring Glenn Ford and Ernest Borgnine. ★★★★

1.05pm The Black Swan (1942/PG) Swashbuckling adventure, with Tyrone Power and Maureen O'Hara. ★★★★

2.50 The Lady Eve (1941/U) Comedy, starring Henry Fonda and Barbara Stanwyck. ★★★★★

4.45 Roman Holiday (1953/U) Romantic comedy, starring Audrey Hepburn. ★★★★★

7.05 Taxi (2004/12) Comedy adventure remake, starring Queen Latifah. ★★★

9.00 The Dive (2023/15) Premiere. A woman is struck by a rock and trapped underwater while deep-sea diving, leaving her sister to try and save her. Thriller, starring Louisa Krause and Sophie Lowe. ★★★

10.50 Underwater (2020/15) Sci-fi thriller, with Kristen Stewart and Mamoudou Athie. ★★★

12.40am Crawl (2019/15) Horror thriller, with Kaya Scodelario and Barry Pepper. ★★★

2.25-4.00am Real (2019/15) Drama, with Amy Manson and Pippa Bennett-Warner. ★★★

SKY CINEMA PREMIERE

6.20am Karate Kid: Legends (2025/12) Drama sequel, starring Jackie Chan. ★★★

8.00 The Phoenician Scheme (2025/15) Wes Anderson's comedy, starring Benicio Del Toro and Mia Threapleton. ★★★★

9.50 Sinners (2025/15) See 5.40pm. ★★★★

12.10pm Safe House (2025/15) See 11.35pm. ★★★

1.50 28 Years Later (2025/15) See 8.00pm. ★★★★

3.50 Friendship (2024/15) Comedy, starring Paul Rudd and Kate Mara. ★★★★

5.40 Sinners (2025/15) Horror, starring Michael B Jordan and Michael B Jordan. ★★★★

8.00 28 Years Later (2025/15) Decades since the rage virus took hold, one survivor leaves the safety of an island on a mission into the mainland. Horror, with Jodie Comer. ★★★★

10.00 All the Devils Are Here (2025/15) Thriller, starring Eddie Marsan and Sam Claflin. ★★★

11.35 Safe House (2025/15) Thriller, with Holt McCallany and Hannah John-Kamen. ★★★

1.15am Friendship (2024/15) See 3.50pm. ★★★★

3.00 The Wedding Banquet (2025/15) Comedy, starring Bowen Yang. ★★★★

4.45-6.20am All the Devils Are Here (2025/15) See 10.00pm. ★★★

SKY CINEMA DRAMA

5.45pm It Ends With Us (2024/15) Drama, with Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni. ★★★★

8.00 American Sniper (2014/15) A Navy Seal finds life back on civvy street difficult to deal with after four tours of Iraq. Biopic, with Bradley Cooper and Sienna Miller. ★★★★

10.20 Cool Hand Luke (1967/15) Drama, with Paul Newman and George Kennedy. ★★★★★

12.30am The Shamrock Spitfire (2024/12) Drama, with Shane O'Regan. ★★★

2.30 I Used to Be Funny (2023/15) Comedy, with Rachel Sennott and Olga Petsa. ★★★

4.20-6.15am Parachute (2023/15) Comedy, starring Courtney Eaton. ★★★★

SKY CINEMA FAMILY

4.20pm The Witches (1990/PG) Children's fantasy, starring Anjelica Huston. ★★★★

6.00 Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events (2004/PG) Comedy adventure, starring Jim Carrey. ★★★★

7.55 The Karate Kid (1984/12) Martial arts drama, starring Ralph Macchio. ★★★★

10.05 Paul Blart: Mall Cop (2009/PG) Comedy, with Kevin James and Keir O'Donnell. ★★★

11.50 The NeverEnding Story (1984/U) Fantasy adventure, with Barret Oliver. ★★★★

1.30am The Wiz (1978/U) Musical based on The Wizard of Oz, starring Diana Ross. ★★

3.50 It Takes Two (1996/U) Children's comedy, with Kirstie Alley and Steve Guttenberg. ★★

5.35-7.20am My Penguin Friend (2024/PG) Drama, starring Jean Reno. ★★★★

TALKING PICTURES TV

8.00pm The Racing Game Mystery thriller.

9.05 Gideon's Way Police drama series.

10.05 The Anderson Tapes (1971/15) Thriller, with Sean Connery and Dyan Cannon. ★★★

12.05am A Good Read: Sherlock Holmes

1.05 Across the Bridge (1957/PG) Thriller, with Rod Steiger and David Knight. ★★★★

3.10-5.25am The Snows of Kilimanjaro (1952/PG) Romantic adventure, starring Gregory Peck and Susan Hayward. ★★★

GREAT! MYSTERY

7.00pm Castle American crime drama.

8.00 Unforgettable Crime drama series.

9.00 Flower Shop Mystery: Mum's the Word (2016/U) Whodunnit, starring Brooke Shields and Brennan Elliott. ★★

10.55 A Diagnosis of Murder (1992/PG) Adventure, starring Dick Van Dyke. ★★

12.55am A Housekeeper's Revenge (2016/PG) Thriller, starring Chrysti Ane. ★★★

2.30 Til Ex Do Us Apart (2018/12) Thriller, starring Daniel Payne. ★★

4.00-6.00am Grandma Dearest (2020/PG) Thriller, starring Wendie Malick. ★★★

ADVERTISEMENT

“It took an embarrassing accident on the 18th hole to discover the solution to my incontinence!”

(For privacy purposes we have used a model’s photo for David)

DAVID PHILLIPS was enjoying retired life, spending time with friends and family and playing a lot more golf! However, a horribly embarrassing moment on the golf course left him feeling incredibly low and he lost all his confidence.

“I think we can all get caught out with the odd dribble now and then, but nothing compared to the day I really wet my trousers on the golf course!

“Thankfully it was the 18th hole! One of the guys was taking his shot when Ben came up and quietly said to me, “Dave, I think you’ve been caught out.” I thought he was accusing me of cheating, but he then nodded down to my trousers. I couldn’t believe it, I had a big wet patch. I was mortified.”

“Don’t worry Dave,” he said, “why don’t you head home and I’ll tell the guys that you felt ill, but let’s meet up soon.”

“Cheers Ben.” I said.

“I couldn’t get back to the car fast enough. I didn’t want to bump into anyone and I headed home. Carol, my wife, was out for the day, which made it easier for me to sort myself out.”

I was so embarrassed

“I was so embarrassed I didn’t really know what to do. I put it to the back of my mind and subconsciously made excuses to not play golf, but to be honest I didn’t want anything so embarrassing to happen again, and I certainly didn’t want to face Ben.”

“Over the next few weeks I avoided going out and was feeling very low. It was so depressing to think that I wouldn’t be able to get out and about for fear of wetting myself. At least only Ben noticed, but come to think of it maybe the others had too, but didn’t mention it. The embarrassment and shame was really getting to me.”

I soaked the bed

“Then, one Sunday morning in bed, Carol gave me a cuddle then yelled out, “Dave, the bed’s wet!” I got out of bed, and needless to say, my pyjama bottoms were soaked.

“Was this really happening I thought. True to form, Carol jumped up, stripped the bed and said, “Not to worry darling, accidents can happen.”

“That’s when I told her about the other little accidents I’d had and the mortifying experience on the golf course. It was such a relief to share my worries with her and loving as ever, she booked an appointment at the GP.

“To cut a long story short, after a few tests my GP told me that **I was suffering with urinary urge incontinence**. He told me to make some lifestyle changes and suggested I buy incontinence bed sheets and pads.”

Pads were bulky and uncomfortable

“Carol had already bought pads, but they were bulky and uncomfortable and not very reliable. They would move about and I would still have leaks coming through, sometimes they worked and sometimes they didn’t and I felt like everyone could tell that I was wearing them.

“About three months later and with a lot of encouragement from Carol, I finally found the courage to go back to the golf club! Would you believe it, just as I was getting my clubs out of the car, Ben walked by! Top timing, I thought and a few other choice words!”

“Dave, I’m sorry but I’d been meaning to give you a call. I hope you don’t mind me saying, but I know what you are going through. **I’ve suffered with incontinence for a few years now.**” he told me.

“I was really sorry to hear what he had gone through and thought it was very good of him to confide in me. I told him what I had, and that my GP said I had to get some pads.”

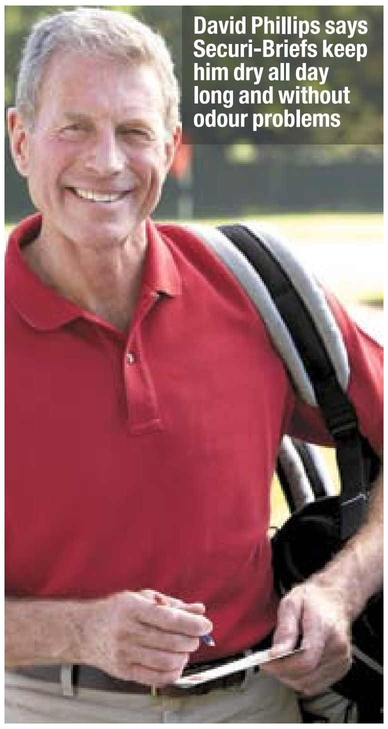
“Oh, don’t use them mate, they are awful. That’s what I wanted to call you about. My life only got back to normal when I found Securi-Briefs. They are just like normal pants, and I’ve never been caught out once whilst wearing them. They stop any leaks no matter how bad, and you put them in the wash to use again and again. I tried lots of brands but believe me these are the best. I’ll text you the details. I can’t tell you how much of a difference they made to my life. Anyway, I’d better be off, have a good game.”

“I was so relieved, he’s a good bloke and to hear about these briefs lifted my spirts. I’d never have guessed that Ben had this problem too. And true to form he texted me the number so I called and ordered 3 pairs that evening.”

Just like normal briefs

“Ben was right, they are like normal briefs. They fit really well, and make you feel confident and secure that you are not going to have any accidents. They come in different absorbency levels, so I use the Super ones at night and Standard ones during the day and thankfully I’ve had no more leaks!

“Since then, I’ve discovered that so many men of a ‘certain age’ suffer with this problem. I’m no longer embarrassed and think more should be done to encourage people to be open about it, and that’s why I am happy to share my story here.


David Phillips says Securi-Briefs keep him dry all day long and without odour problems

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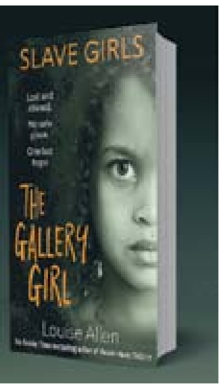
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Letters

Edited by GREG MORGAN

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LETTER OF THE DAY

Various governments have overlooked care "time bomb"

Government ignored care 'time bomb'

SOCIAL care is the huge elephant in the room successive governments have chosen to ignore ("Get a grip on social care crisis", January 3).

It's at crisis point: the cost is bankrupting councils, with many spending more than 70% of their total budget on it. The shires are hit hardest. Shropshire is but one example, declaring a financial emergency, but trying to stave off a Government takeover that would hike council tax way beyond 4.99%.

But Shropshire's plight, however serious, falls far short of what other councils predict.

It's a ticking time bomb. Give councils a realistic financial allocation to overcome this and don't continue starving them of cash? Or is more Government control a hidden agenda?

Mike Crump,
Bridgnorth, Salop

Double murderer forfeited rights so why pay £240k?

I CANNOT believe the Deputy PM and Justice Secretary has agreed to pay a murderer who shot two teenagers in the head £7,500 compensation plus legal costs of £234,000 ("David Lammy signs off £240k for Islamist killer over human rights", January 1).

Sorry, my error, not Lammy. It's us, the poor, long-suffering taxpayers who will be paying.

Fuad Awale is a double murderer and has forfeited any rights he had – definitely those to our money.

What planet is our Government living on? It's not here on Earth.

Ena Hanks,
Guildford, Surrey

Best way to end this farce is to execute all killers

AS DAVID Lammy rewards an Islamist killer with a compensation payout and legal costs amounting to £240,000 as a result of an ECHR ruling that his human rights were affected by the terms of his imprisonment, let's take the proper action to make sure this never happens again. Time to reintroduce capital punishment for all killers.

John Kennedy,
Hornchurch, Essex

Politicians are only there to control us, not help

I'M AFRAID Dame Esther Rantzen will once again be disappointed if she believes that asking the public to appeal to peers will unlock the year-long progression of the assisted dying bill through Parliament ("'For too long the voices of the people who are dying have been missing from the heart of the debate'", January 1).

History shows us that politicians are all about exercising power over us and curbing our rights and freedoms through legislation and taxation – it took them 100 years to pass women's suffrage, and suicide, homosexuality and abortion weren't legalised until the 1960s.

Roy Daniels,
Kingsclere, Hants

Labour protects itself and leaves Britons in danger

SO THE Home Office's response to Tory Chris Philp's demand, that Shamima Begum's ban on returning to this country stays in place, is to issue a statement saying the Government will always protect the UK and its citizens ("Isis bride 'must never come back'", January 1). This country... protecting its citizens? What a load of tosh.

How can that be true when just last week, Keir Starmer welcomes an antisemite who refers to our citizens as monkeys and dogs, is given free rein to live here, along with thousands of illegal migrants, many of whom have little or no respect for women or our laws.

Not only that, but we are now told that council homes are to be made available to illegals, while those who have been on housing waiting lists for years are to continue waiting. How is that fair or protecting British citizens?

The Home Office and this disastrous Government are living on a different planet to the rest of us. It is time that they were kicked out of office.

Ruth Peberdy,
Bridgwater, Somerset

Latest Begum act to play the victim will not wash

SHAMIMA Begum is now presenting herself as a regular Western girl devoid of her previous Muslim attire and as a victim, say European human rights lawyers, of child trafficking.

She was indeed only 15 and has lived through some traumatic events, but was still unmoved or unwavering in her support of Isis during it all as an adult.

Her true loyalties under the surface of her transformation will always remain suspicious. In interviews, Begum still stops short of singing Britain's praises and speaks with an air of entitlement of being welcomed back into the very country she betrayed.

The European courts may well fight her case but it sits uncomfortably that they question the right of British courts and politicians to reject someone who does not respect the values of Britain and just wishes to return for a more comfortable life.

Diane Silva,
Bournemouth, Dorset

Shamima a bigger threat than armada of illegals

OUR Government has made no effort to stop illegal migrants from invading our country and now they're planning to build homes to house them, rather than tag, detain and deport them immediately.

And here they are spending taxpayers' money in the ECHR to stop Shamima Begum from coming back to this country, as she's seen as a terror risk rather than as a stupid, ignorant woman who left these shores as a silly, ill-informed little girl.

What is the point, what is the difference? Most fear these criminal fighting-age men rather than this ignorant woman.

Brett Trafford,
Vyne Park, Hants

Surprise, surprise! The UK taxpayer picks up legal bill

I HAVE an answer for your correspondent Dr Peter Outen regarding Shamima Begum ("Lawyers work Begum ticket back to UK", January 1).

I Googled his questions regarding who pays the lawyers etc and the internet tells me it's legal aid, via the taxpayers.

I haven't noticed so many of them fighting for white girls abused by grooming gangs.

Brenda McKenna,
Hoylake, Merseyside

Strip El-Fattah's birthright just like ex-Prince Andrew

IF ALAA Abd el-Fattah was given British citizenship so easily, why is it so difficult to revoke it ("Mahmood does have the power to deport 'hate tweet' dissident", January 2)? After all, it didn't take long to remove the titles of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor when it was deemed necessary.

Christopher Humphreys,
Ewloe, Flint

Mountbatten-Windsor is one of few to pay price

HOW I agree with Virginia Blackburn's comments about Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor (January 1).

Yes, he has been all she said. However, like Virginia said, I fail to understand why he is paying such a price and will never be left alone. No others have been treated like he has and he's certainly not the only one. Any victims other than Virginia Giuffre must know who did what in this never-ending and dreadful saga.

Jean Firmin,
Maldon, Essex

OH FOR A STATESMAN LIKE TRUMP WHO GETS THINGS DONE

SO MANY British citizens now look across the Atlantic towards the US with envy at the way it is being governed.

Donald Trump, like him or loathe him, has put his people first in all things, exiled those with no right to live in his country and stopped mass illegal migration.

The American people are not, nor will they ever be, ruled by decisions taken by foreign courts, unlike our own country.

You can clearly see the attraction of this style of governance.

Would the UK thrive if we had a statesman with the same drive?

Anthony Richardson,
Stirling

TODAY: Monday January 5, 2026

ON THIS DAY

DAILY EXPRESS

Bluebird's death leap

THIS IS WHY

59 years ago (1967)

We captured the tragic moment Donald Campbell's Bluebird K7 lifted out of the water before somersaulting in mid-air then sinking.

Campbell was travelling at 319mph on Coniston Water in the Lake District when the nose of the jet-powered boat rose up in the air and the wind pressure caused it to become airborne.

The wreckage, and Campbell's body, were recovered in 2001.

74 years ago (1952)

Prime Minister Winston Churchill arrived in New York on the Queen Mary to renew the "special relationship" between Great Britain and the United States of America.

He then travelled to Washington DC for talks with President Harry S Truman at the White House.

25 years ago (2001)

A report concluded that Dr Harold Shipman may have killed 250 of his patients, confirming him to be Britain's worst serial killer.

The former GP, who had practised in Hyde, Greater Manchester, for 25 years had been sentenced to life for 15 murders in January 2000.

Shipman committed suicide in his cell in Wakefield Prison in 2004.

BIRTHDAYS

A Star Is Born actor **Bradley Cooper** is 51. He considered becoming a diplomat. Apocalypse Now star **Robert Duvall** is 95. He made his film debut in in 1962's To Kill A Mockingbird. Model **Suki Waterhouse** turns 34. She is also an actress. Actor **Vinnie Jones** is 61. He played football for Wales.

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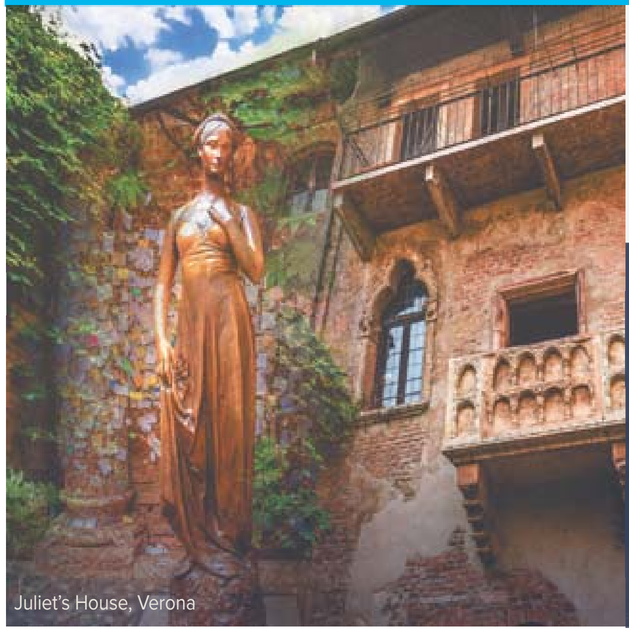

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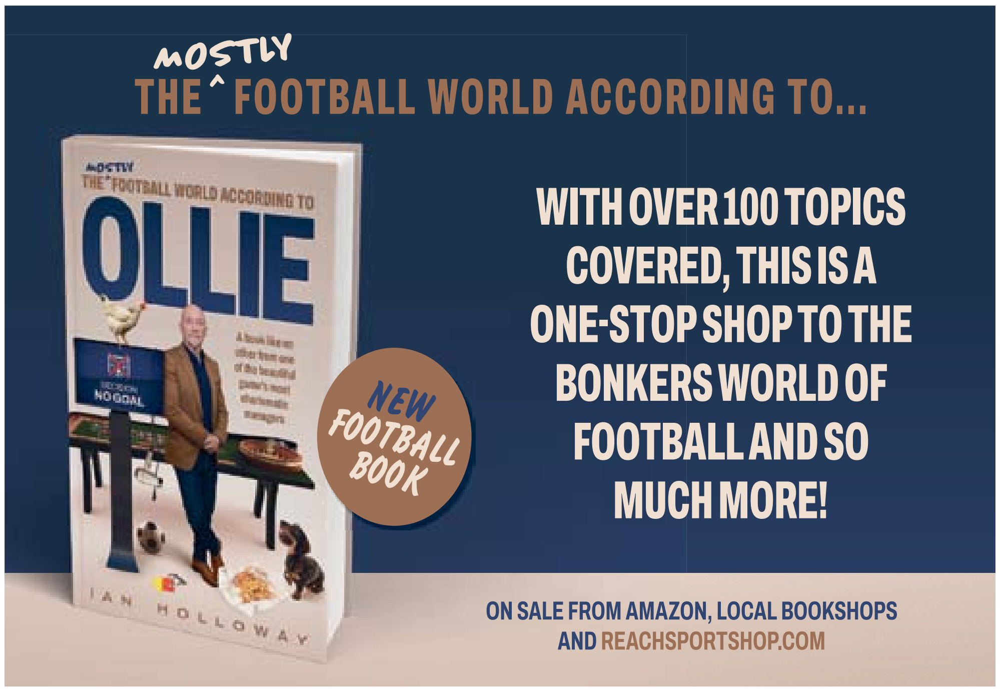

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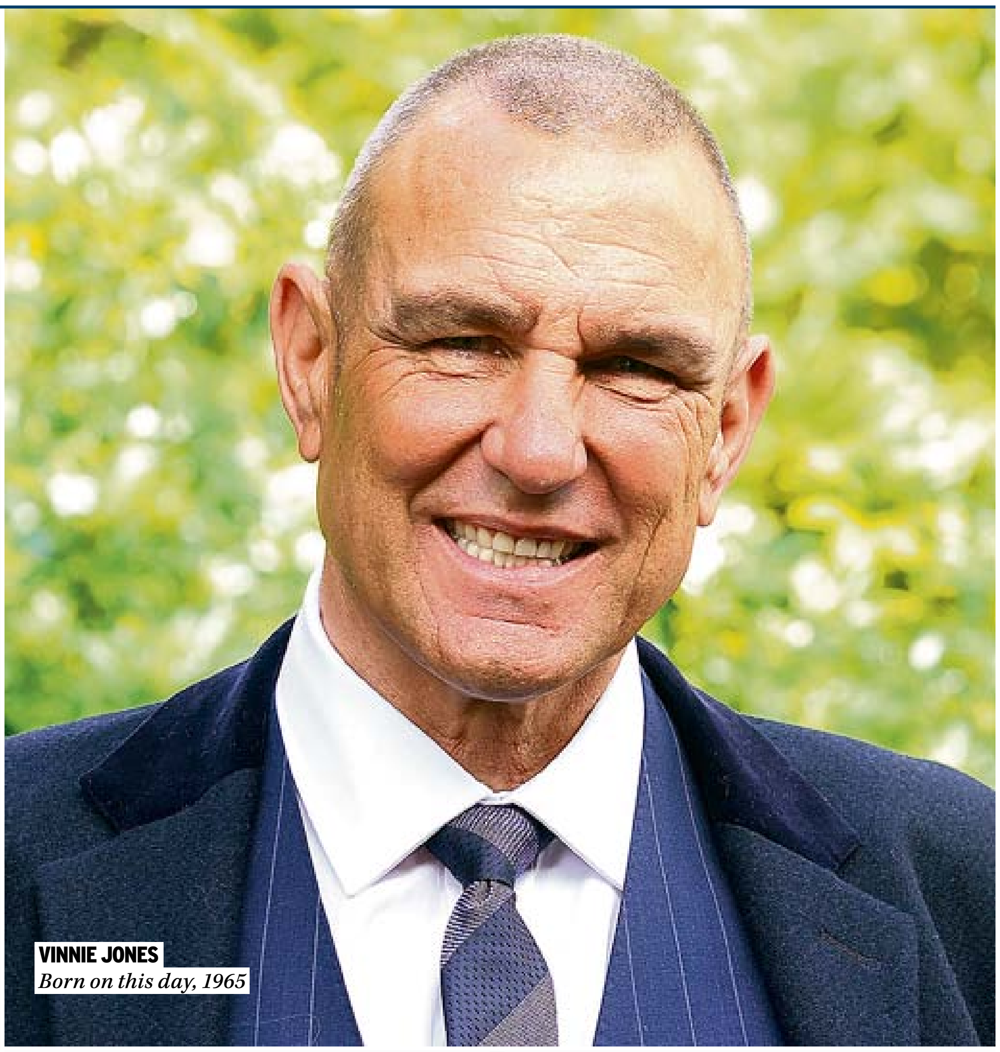
VINNIE JONES
Born on this day, 1965

ARIES MARCH 21-APRIL 20

Unexpected news could mean you will have to start out on a lengthy journey. This provokes a variety of responses and while you feel fine about it, there's also a hint of anxiety too. Overall, it's important to accept and adapt to whatever changes are going on around you. Certain things you can't control so don't waste your mental energy worrying.

For more call **0905 789 4171**
(80p/min + network access charge)

TAURUS APRIL 21-MAY 21

Providing that you think about your health and personal needs, you will do just fine. If you keep pushing yourself to the maximum, then the result will turn out to be the opposite. You need to take it easy and avoid exhausting yourself by pushing too much. A text message or evening phone call will be of some importance.

For more call **0905 789 4172**
(80p/min + network access charge)

GEMINI MAY 22-JUNE 21

Outside commitments conflict with family responsibilities and this then creates a growing sense of pressure. Rather than trying to juggle everything on your own, you need to discuss your situation with others. This openness will lead to more favourable arrangements in future. A joint effort will yield positive results.

For more call **0905 789 4173**
(80p/min + network access charge)

CANCER JUNE 22-JULY 23

You need to think about future plans and in particular those that require someone else's consent or involvement. Arrangements made now will bring advantages in the long run. You will feel at ease with the company you keep today and that's because you're mixing with people who are kind and sensitive, just like you.

For more call **0905 789 4174**
(80p/min + network access charge)

LEO JULY 24-AUG 23

Regardless of how small your achievements might seem at first, you shouldn't feel guilty about taking pride in them. In fact, the progress you're making now might motivate you to explore new opportunities for the coming months ahead. You have a strong feeling 2026 is going to be a good year. Change will be positive.

For more call **0905 789 4175**
(80p/min + network access charge)

VIRGO AUG 24-SEPT 23

There are subtle energies around you that you might miss if you find yourself thrown in the spotlight. You are being encouraged, instead, to take a low-key approach to relationships. Reflect carefully on certain situations before deciding on what you are going to do next. Leave big decisions for another day.

For more call **0905 789 4176**
(80p/min + network access charge)

LIBRA SEPT 24-OCT 23

Friends, workmates and your family too, are eager to explore new plans and ideas. You accept the start of another year brings excitement for new opportunities, yet there are certain matters that you would prefer to leave untouched. Don't allow anyone to pressure you into decisions you are not prepared to make.

For more call **0905 789 4177**
(80p/min + network access charge)

SCORPIO OCT 24-NOV 22

An exciting new opportunity will arise at the start of the day that is perfect for your particular skills. This job won't just be given to you easily. You may need to express your interest to others. This is your chance to demonstrate your abilities to everyone. Speak out or you will miss out. It is not a time to be quiet and humble.

For more call **0905 789 4178**
(80p/min + network access charge)

SAGITTARIUS NOV 23-DEC 21

Financial issues have come to your attention. While you have managed to ignore these in recent days and weeks, it is now imperative that you make important decisions. Additionally, there may be legal implications related to the matters you are addressing today. In this, it may be necessary to get professional advice.

For more call **0905 789 4179**
(80p/min + network access charge)

CAPRICORN DEC 22-JAN 20

Committing to a long-term goal will lead to you making a big achievement later in 2026. First you need to get organised. Designate a spot for everything and remove the clutter that has accumulated in your home and workplace over the last month or so. Then draw up plans on how you might reach your goal and stay focused.

For more call **0905 789 4180**
(80p/min + network access charge)

AQUARIUS JAN 21-FEB 19

While they may not express it openly, your friends and workmates do value the dedication and sacrifices you are making in order to launch a group project. Recognition will ultimately find its way to you. In the meantime, pause and acknowledge your own efforts privately and just think of how valuable this experience is to you.

For more call **0905 789 4181**
(80p/min + network access charge)

PISCES FEB 20-MARCH 20

Your natural friendliness helps others feel comfortable in your company. When you're at work and encounter come new faces, you will be the person to make them feel the most welcomed and relaxed. Evening plans may lead you to a noisy environment where you can hardly hear yourself think. Don't be afraid to leave early.

For more call **0905 789 4182**
(80p/min + network access charge)

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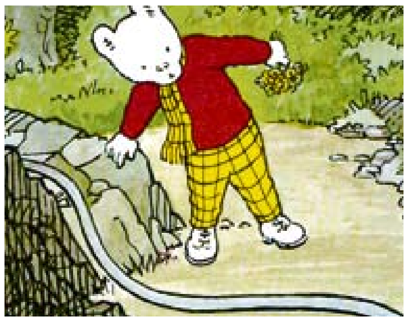
NUTWOOD TALES

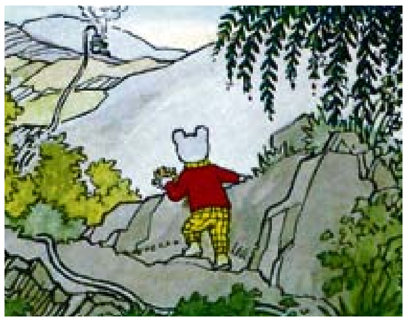
To order a copy of the Rupert Annual 2024 (£10.99) visit www.expressbookshop.com or call Express Bookshop on 020 3176 3832. Free UK P&P on online orders over £25.

RUPERT AND THE PENGUINS No.2



It trails away across the ground,
Towards a faint chug-chugging sound.

"A little engine!" Rupert stares.
"The pipe's fixed to it!" he declares.



Rupert investigates the strange pipe. It seems to go through bushes. "Where can it be going?" he wonders. Then Rupert hears a curious sound in the distance. "Chug-chug, chug-chug," it goes. As far as he can tell, it seems to be coming from high above the river. "That's an engine!" Rupert exclaims, and gazing up he sees puffs of smoke. "I'm right," he says. "And what's more, this pipe's fixed to it. But what's it for? And who fixed it?"

CALVIN AND HOBBES
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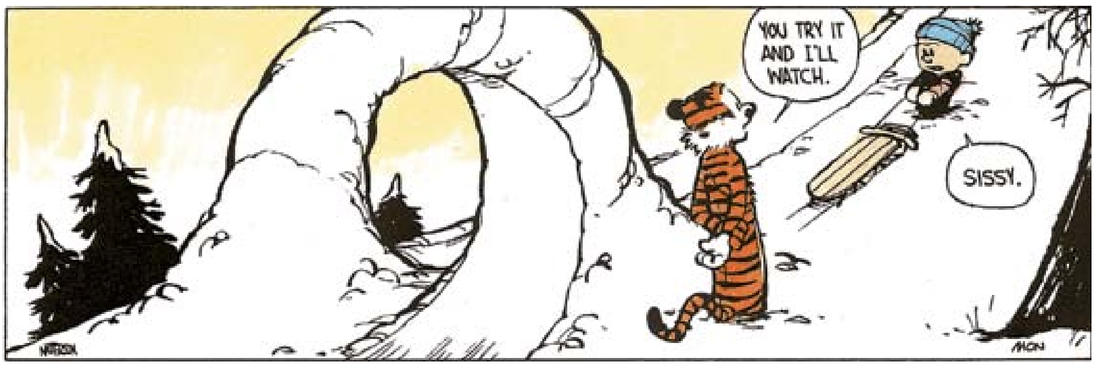
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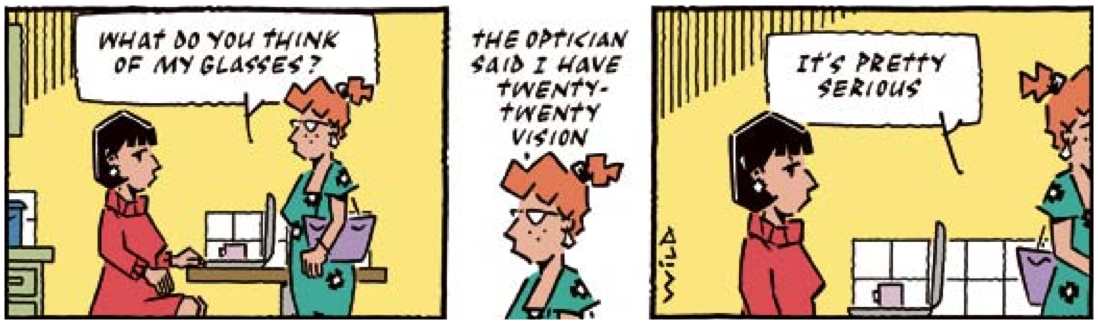
SISSY.

FAITH, HOPE AND SUE
LISA WILD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IT'S PRETTY SERIOUS
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Introducing the Colfax Power Motion Lift-Assist Recliner – the perfect fusion of comfort, style, and functionality. This chair is designed to elevate your relaxation experience, whether you're winding down after a long day or taking a well-deserved nap. Crafted with a solid, hard wooden frame and a strong metal recline mechanism, the Colfax ensures durability and long-lasting use, so you can enjoy comfort for years to come.

SUPPORT-FOCUSED DESIGN

Upholstered in luxurious, textured fabric, the Colfax recliner offers a soft, cosy feel with an added touch of style. Its sleek grey colour blends effortlessly with any décor, making it an elegant addition to any room. The chair features infinite recline positions, allowing you to adjust the chair to your perfect angle. Whether you're lounging, reading, or relaxing, you can find the position that best suits your comfort needs.

For those who may need assistance standing up, the lift-assist function is an invaluable feature. It gently helps you rise from a seated position, offering enhanced mobility and independence. The Colfax ensures you don't have to sacrifice comfort for practicality.

MASSAGE AND HEAT FUNCTION FOR EXTRA RELAXATION

In addition to its superior recline and lift capabilities, the Colfax is equipped with integrated massage points in the seat, lower back, and upper back. These massage points target areas where tension builds up, offering a soothing, therapeutic experience that helps relieve aches and stresses. This makes the Colfax ideal for relaxing after a busy day.

With its thoughtful design, sturdy construction, and luxurious features, the Colfax Power Motion Lift-Assist Recliner is more than just a chair - it's a vital part of your home relaxation routine. Embrace comfort, mobility, and relaxation with the Colfax and make it your go-to spot for everyday unwinding.

- ✓ Electrically operated rise and recline
- ✓ Warming heat function
- ✓ Massage points in seat, lower back and upper back
- ✓ Textured fabric
- ✓ Size: H92 x W94 x D85 cm

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- ✓ 18 pre-set modes + dual-cook function
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- ✓ Removable crumb tray & easy-clean interior
- ✓ Includes air fryer basket, baking pan, oven rack
- ✓ Dimensions: H36.5 x W45 x D35cm

Make everyday cooking simple and versatile with this 30L multifunction Air Fryer Toaster Oven. Large enough to handle meals for the whole family, it can roast a 1.5kg chicken, bake fresh bread, or crisp up fries in one convenient appliance.

EVEN COOKING, EVERY TIME

The 360° heat circulation ensures food cooks evenly, while 18 pre-set functions, adjustable temperature, and a 60-minute timer give precise control for every recipe. The dual-cook function lets you run two programmes in sequence, so different dishes finish at the same time.

DESIGNED FOR CONVENIENCE

A flip-down glass door with built-in safety pause makes it easy to access food without losing heat. An inner light allows you to check progress, and the removable crumb tray keeps cleaning fast and simple. Its efficient cooling system prevents overheating and protects the oven, making it safe to use every day.

VERSATILE AND PRACTICAL

The oven comes with an air fryer basket, baking pan, and oven rack, allowing you to cook multiple foods at once or switch between cooking styles with ease. The combined touch and rotary controls provide simple, accurate operation, while the compact footprint fits neatly on any countertop.

With so many practical features in one powerful oven, it is ideal for preparing family meals, hosting small gatherings, or creating a wide variety of dishes with minimal effort.

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- ✓ Plant type: Perennial
- ✓ Flowering period: June - September
- ✓ Position: Full sun
- ✓ Height / Spread in maturity: 80cm/50cm
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- ✓ Good for: Pots, wildlife, pollinators, cuttings

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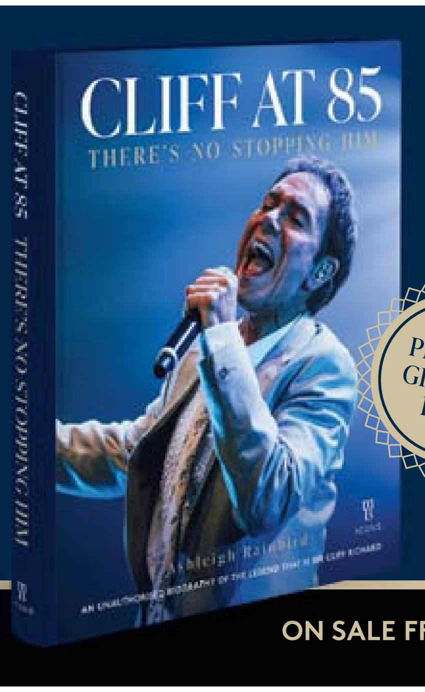

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Wolverhampton on weather watch

By **David Yates**

FROST has caused the cancellation of today's jumps action at Lingfield and Ludlow – and even Wolverhampton's all-weather card hinges on a 9.30am inspection.

Ludlow's clerk of the course Simon Sherwood, right, and Stephanie Wethered, his opposite number at Lingfield, called off this afternoon's cards after checks on the racing surface yesterday - leaving Dunstall Park's nine-race Tapeta programme as punters' only hope.

"It's a precautionary inspection – we're 100 per cent raceable at the moment," reported Wolverhampton's Fergus Cameron.

"I'd be confident we'd be able to deal with a light amount of snow."

Tomorrow's jumps fixture at Musselburgh fell to the elements on Saturday and, with prospects for Leicester - inspecting at 8am today - on Wednesday described as "not brilliant", turf racing is set to be wiped out until Taunton the following afternoon.

STRAIGHT FORWARD

File could go direct to Ryanair

By **David Yates**

FACT TO FILE is poised to defend his Ryanair Chase crown without another race after a below-par showing in the King George VI Chase on Boxing Day.

Punters sent Willie Mullins' nine-year-old off at 3-1 at Kempton but Mark Walsh's mount could manage just sixth of eight behind the Ben Pauling-saddled The Jukebox Man.

Fact To File, beaten a neck by stablemate and King George third Gaelic Warrior when defending his title in the John Durkan Memorial Punchestown Chase 33 days earlier, is Hill's 5-2 favourite to gain back-to-back Ryanair Chase successes at Cheltenham on March 12.

The JP McManus-owned gelding will receive an entry in the Irish Gold Cup at Leopardstown on January 31 but is more likely to head straight to the Festival.

"I'd say that will be the plan," said McManus's racing manager Frank Berry, above.

"He came out of Kempton fine. He was disappointing – he didn't run terribly but he didn't finish out the race as well as we expected. However, the ground was quick enough for him on the day."

Berry revealed Gavin Cromwell is awaiting the result of "a few tests" carried out on Cheltenham Gold Cup hero Inothewayurthinkin in the wake of his lacklustre ninth of 11 in the Savills Chase at Leopardstown last month.

"He just didn't fire on the day," he added. "He came out of the race very sound and Gavin is doing a few tests on different things.

"He'll have an entry in the [Irish] Gold Cup and I'd say that will be his [Cheltenham Gold Cup] prep run.

"You'd like to see a bit of light there, definitely."

MATTER OF FACT

Fact To File is still on course for Cheltenham despite a below-par KGVI display

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SP FORECAST: 3 Eye Of The Water, 7-2 Call Glory, 9-2 Under Curfew, 13-2 Oldbury Lad, 7 Dash Power, 15-2 Mishy's Star, 12 United Force, 16 For What Its Worth.

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6	(1)	535577-	MR TRICK (146) (C,D)	I Williams 8 9-9	E Greatrex	48
7	(5)	L8L566-	ROGUE THUNDER (28) (C,D)	P Morris 6 9-9	D E Hogan	52
8	(7)	563990-	THE GAY BLADE (20) (D) (T)	I Jardine 7 9-9	A Mullen	★60

CHEEK PIECES: No. 5 HOOD: No. 7.

SP FORECAST: 11-4 Rogue Thunder, 10-3 Evoluir, 5 Captain Pickles, 6 American Rose, Kodebreaker, 10 Mr Trick, The Gay Blade, 20 Anificas Beauty.

5.00 BETMGM.CO.UK CLASSIFIED STAKES (DIV 3)
£4,711 (6) 7f 36yds (8)

1	(8)	227042-	AIM FOR THE BULL (18)	M Murphy 4 9-9	C Shepherd	55
2	(4)	665745-	AL BAAHY (17) (D)	K Frost 7 9-9	J Mitchell	★59
3	(6)	088355-	CATHERINE CHROI (31) (D) (T) (S)	I Jardine 8 9-9	A Mullen	55
4	(2)	LR6870-	MAGIC FLUKE (81)	J R Jenkins 5 9-9	M Ghiani	46
5	(1)	7L8008/	MUSAYTIR (553)	Joe Ponting 8 9-9	G Mangan	–
6	(5)	788L49-	STRAIGHT BACK UP (19)	Dr R Newland & J Insole 4 9-9	Lloyd Applegate(7)	56
7	(7)	443006-	● SUPERNOVA STEPS (9)	D Loughnane 5 9-9	R Scott	54
8	(3)	365415-	VITALLINE (14) (D)	Kieran Burke 8 9-9	Josephine Gordon	58

BLINKERS: No. 3 TONGUE STRAP: No. 8 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 1, 8 HOOD: No. 6.

SP FORECAST: 3 Supernova Steps, 7-2 Aim For The Bull, 4 Vitalline, 5 Al Baahy, 6 Catherine Chroi, 7 Straight Back Up, 25 Magic Fluke, 33 Musaytir.

TRACK FACTS: GOING: Standard. Left Handed. **TOP TRACK JOCKEY (2021-26):** Jack Mitchell 15% Strike rate. **TOP TRACK TRAINER (2021-26):** A Carroll 10% Strike rate. **FIRST TIME:** 4.00 For What Its Worth (cheek pieces), 6.00 New Bay Star (cheek pieces), 6.30 Donna Nook (visor), Soho Square (visor), 8.00 Sultan Of Oj (cheek pieces, tongue strap). **DRAW:** Little effect. **LONGEST TRAVELLER: The Gay Blade** (4.30) & **Catherine Chroi** (5.00) 205 miles. **STABLE SWITCH:** 4.30 **Captain Pickles** from Mrs Stella Barclay to T & S Barclay. 5.00 **Musaytir** from G Harris to Joe Ponting. 5.30 **Abando** from M Botti to J Osborne, **Daddy Chill** from A Balding to P Chamings. 6.30 **Mollie Foster** from E Walker to M Loughnane. 8.00 **Sir Benedict** from Mrs Stella Barclay to T & S Barclay.

WOLVERHAMPTON SSR

5.30 BETMGM RESTRICTED NOVICE STAKES
£5,400 (4) 1m 142yds (10)

1	(5)	530L54-	ABANDO (88) (S)	J Osborne 4 10-2	S Osborne	★90
2	(3)	34-	DADDY CHILL (297)	P Chamings 4 10-0	Charlie Tucker(7)	66
3	(4)	L-	MISS HELENA (14)	M Mullineaux 4 9-7	F McManoman	–
4	(9)	22-	● ALBA GU BRATH (23)	C Johnston 3 8-9	C Shepherd	69
5	(7)	447-	FIVE CAY (10)	Jack Morland 3 8-9	E Greatrex	62
6	(1)	L0-	MADJID (28)	Harry Charlton 3 8-9	G Wood	36
7	(8)	97-	NANDO'S PRIDE (33)	M Loughnane 3 8-7	J Dace(5)	25
8	(2)	46-	BIG MOONRISE (9)	P Evans 3 8-5	T Heard	40
9	(6)	5-	POOR RELATION (21)	Ollie Sangster 3 8-4	S D Bowen	61
10	(10)	65-	VERY DEMURE (16)	A Watson 3 8-2	Laura Coughlan(3)	59

SP FORECAST: 11-10 Alba Gu Brath, 3 Daddy Chill, 8 Poor Relation, 10 Very Demure, 12 Abando, Five Cay, 16 Madjid, 25 Big Moonrise, 50 Others.

6.00 BETMGM NOVICE STAKES (GBB RACE) 3YO
£6,480 (3) 1m 1f 104yds (7)

1	(7)		ASIA FORCE	K R Burke 9-7	P-L Jamin	–
2	(2)	3-	GENUINE WARRIOR (26)	Harry Charlton 9-7	C Rodriguez	69
3	(6)	65-	INHERENT RESOLVE (18) (F)	M Bell 9-7	C Shepherd	73
4	(3)	L4-	LEVEL LOOK (14) (F)	A Balding 9-7	C Hutchinson	69
5	(1)	6342-	● NEW BAY STAR (25) (F)	C Johnston 9-7	J Mitchell	★78
6	(5)	L8-	AL AMIRAH (32)	I Mohammed 9-2	S D Bowen	65
7	(4)	96-	ANGRY ANT (21)	J Osborne 9-2	S Osborne	70

CHEEK PIECES: No. 5 HOOD: No. 3.

SP FORECAST: 15-8 New Bay Star, 9-4 Asia Force, 7 Angry Ant, 8 Genuine Warrior, Level Look, 10 Inherent Resolve, 20 Al Amirah.

6.30 BETMGM FILLIES' HANDICAP
£4,972 (4) 1m 142yds (5)

1	(2)	483301-	● MOLLIE FOSTER (81)	M Loughnane 4 9-11	C Fallon	82
2	(1)	59L451-	ENOLA GREY (21) (C,F)	G Tutty 6 9-11	Kaiya Fraser	82
3	(3)	L6423-8	DONNA NOOK (4)	D O'Meara 4 9-7	Jason Watson	★85
4	(5)	32631-	GREAT MATES (44) (C&D)	M Wigham 4 9-7	D Keenan	81
5	(4)	9/1L24L-	SOHO SQUARE (46)	E Bethell 4 9-3	C Shepherd	84

VISOR: Nos. 3, 5.

SP FORECAST: 7-4 Enola Grey, 5-2 Great Mates, 3 Mollie Foster, 8 Donna Nook, 10 Soho Square.

7.00 BET 10 GET 40 WITH BETMGM HCAP 3YO
£3,140 (6) 1m 1f 104yds (9)

1	(8)	754613-	● ONYEISI (16) (F)	C Johnston 9-9	J Mitchell	61
2	(7)	958-	SWEET MABEL (16)	D Loughnane 9-5	R Scott	57
3	(2)	85L752-	CHILLICONCARNEIGH (21)	P Evans 9-4	P Cosgrave	61
4	(3)	08L385-	TRUST NO ONE (6)	Lemos Souza 9-1	K O'Neill	★66
5	(6)	8L8-	JUST CALL ME MO (46)	J Parr 8-13	D Keenan	61
6	(1)	7L7-	MONTU (28)	Jack Jones 8-13	D E Hogan	56
7	(5)	7L4555-	SHES GOT THE BLUES (21)	A Carroll 8-12	M Ghiani	65
8	(9)	8094-	FAMILY VALUES (21)	D Cunha 8-9	J Dace(5)	59
9	(4)	787LL-	WILL HE SHINE (41)	A Carroll 8-9	Jack Doughty	56

BLINKERS: Nos. 1, 8 TONGUE STRAP: No. 4 CHEEK PIECES: No. 4.

SP FORECAST: 13-8 Chilliconcarneigh, 7-2 Onyeisi, 6 Trust No One, 7 Family Values, 10 Shes Got The Blues, 12 Montu, 16 Just Call Me Mo, 33 Others.

THE SCOUT

4.00	Call Glory	6.30	Mollie Foster
4.30	AMERICAN ROSE (nap)	7.00	ONYEISI (nb)
5.00	Supernova Steps	7.30	Far Too Fizzy
5.30	Alba Gu Brath	8.00	Auntie Jo
6.00	New Bay Star		

7.30 BEST ODDS AT BETMGM HANDICAP 3YO
£3,140 (6) 5f 21yds (4)

1	(4)	015282-	● FAR TOO FIZZY (6) (S)	D Loughnane 9-9	R Scott	60
2	(1)	35L348-	HAVIN A FLYER (7) (F)	R Menzies 9-8	T Kiely-Marshall(5)	★63
3	(2)	L026-	MYTHICAL NIGHT (25) (F)	D Cunha 9-7	C Fallon	57
4	(3)	9LL-	AMAZON JUNGLE (173)	J & S Quinn 8-13	J Hart	57

CHEEK PIECES: No. 3.

SP FORECAST: 8-11 Far Too Fizzy, 3 Mythical Night, 6 Havin A Flyer, 7 Amazon Jungle.

8.00 JOIN THE MIDNITE MOVEMENT HANDICAP
£3,140 (6) 5f 21yds (11)

1	(2)	35735-4	● AUNTIE JO (4) (S)	D O'Meara 4 9-9	M Winn	★64
2	(7)	2LL8L7-	NORDIC GAMES (40) (D)	N Wilson 4 9-9	Rhys Elliott(5)	55
3	(10)	162526-	SIR BENEDICT (23) (D)	T & S Barclay 8 9-8	S Donohoe	62
4	(1)	423L05-	SIR RODNEYREDBLOOD (19) (D)	J R Jenkins 9 9-8	M Ghiani	60
5	(11)	76L78-7	GLOBAL EFFORT (3) (C&D,F)	P McEntee 6 9-5	Doubtful	57
6	(8)	524522-	KIPP KELLY (202)	D Shaw 5 9-4	Doubtful	62
7	(3)	63442-2	COLORS OF FREEDOM (3) (C&D)	Joe Ponting 6 9-3	G Mangan	63
8	(4)	L6862-6	SULTAN OF OJ (3)	T Faulkner 4 9-1	K O'Neill	61
9	(5)	74LLLL-	INCONSPICUOUS (18)	S Edmunds 4 9-1	C Hardie	35
10	(6)	L665L7-	ROGUE ENDEAVOUR (96)	G Harris 4 9-0	D E Hogan	49
11	(9)	8674L-4	SECOND COLLECTION (3) (C&D)	A Carroll 10 9-0	M Slater(7)	58

BLINKERS: No. 2 VISOR: No. 5 TONGUE STRAP: Nos. 2, 8 CHEEK PIECES: Nos. 3, 7, 8, 9, 10.

SP FORECAST: 9-4 Colors Of Freedom, 4 Sultan Of Oj, 9-2 Sir Benedict, 5 Auntie Jo, 7 Sir Rodneyredblood, 12 Second Collection, 16 Nordic Games, 25 Others.

GOSSIP FROM THE GALLOPS

Scotland: CATHERINE CHROI (5.00 Wolverhampton)
Lambourn: ABANDO (5.30 Wolverhampton)
Midlands: FAR TOO FIZZY (7.30 Wolverhampton)
North: AUNTIE JO (8.00 Wolverhampton)

VITAL STATISTICS

IN-FORM TRAINERS (last 10 days) S Edmunds 60% (1 wins and 2 places from 5 runners), D O'Meara 53% (1/8/17), A Balding 50% (2/3/10), A Carroll 50% (8/12/40).

IN-FORM JOCKEYS Gina Mangan 50% (3 wins and 1 places from 8 runners), Pierre Jamin 50% (1/3/8), Rowan Scott 50% (2/4/12).

RESULTS

SOUTHWELL: Standard

1.00—DAPPER GEE GEE (G Mangan, 7-1) 1; Invincible Melody (4-1 2nd fav) 2; Jamaican Storm (7-1) 3. H'cap 12 ran. 1¼l, shd. (A Carroll; 7-2 fav Portoro). Tote: £8.00; pl £1.80, £2.70, £2.80. exacta: £44.50. tricast: £216.46. trifecta: £329.30. CSF: £36.50.

1.30—DOWN TO THE KID (N Callan, 10-3 fav) 1; How Impressive (15-2) 2; Judgment Call (12-1) 3. H'cap 12 ran. 1¼l, ½l. (M Herrington). Tote: £4.34; pl £1.30, £3.60, £4.00. exacta: £36.80. tricast: £286.17. trifecta: £614.70. CSF: £29.77.

2.00—MAGNA (N Callan, 11-4 2nd fav) 1; Secret Road (11-8 fav) 2; Forever Noah (14-1) 3. H'cap 10 ran. shd, 1¼l. (A Carroll). Tote: £3.75; pl £1.40, £1.30, £5.80. exacta: £10.40. tricast: £46.38. trifecta: £81.70. CSF: £7.20.

2.30—CALL GLORY (R Kavanagh, 11-4 fav) 1; Court Of Session (17-2) 2; Ramon Di Loria (13-2) 3. H'cap 9 ran. 1½l, ½l. (I Williams). Tote: £3.75; pl £1.20, £1.90, £2.20. exacta: £19.30. tricast: £142.77. trifecta: £63.00. CSF: £28.01.

3.00—EXISTENT (J Dace, 11-2) 1; Ziggy's Triton (3-1 2nd fav) 2; D Flawless (50-1) 3. H'cap 9 ran. nk, ½l. (S C Williams; 5-2 fav Hiya Maite). Tote: £7.00; pl £2.20, £1.10, £8.60. exacta: £30.60. tricast: £755.96. trifecta: £788.80. CSF: £22.77. Non-runner: Lion's House.

3.35—ARLINGTON (M Slater, 9-2 2nd fav) 1; Stash The Cash (16-1) 2; Bishop's Glory (14-1) 3. H'cap 12 ran. hd, 1¼l. (B Smart; 7-2 fav Juno Star). Tote: £6.50; pl £2.50, £4.10, £4.80. exacta: £89.20. tricast: £964.04. trifecta: £1646.90. CSF: £77.99.

4.05—DUCHESS (G Mangan, 28-1) 1; Thundering Breeze (7-2 2nd fav) 2; Karismatique (80-1) 3. H'cap 11 ran. 1½l, 1l. (J Berry; 10-3 fav Marinakis). Tote: £34.90; pl £6.40, £1.80, £11.80. exacta: £286.10. tricast: £7832.94. trifecta: £3815.00. CSF: £128.91.

4.35—MOON OVER THE SEA (G Mangan, 11-2) 1; Krissy (13-8 fav) 2; Knight Of Magic (3-1 2nd fav) 3. H'cap 10 ran. ½l, 3l. (A Carroll). Tote: £6.50; pl £1.10, £1.40, £1.60. exacta: £20.70. tricast: £33.34. trifecta: £73.40. CSF: £15.33.

5.05—TIMELY AFFAIR (N Callan, evens fav) 1; Relevant Range (14-1) 2; Wheres The Crumpet (22-1) 3. 12 ran. hd, 2l. (W Knight). Tote: £2.10; pl £1.30, £4.70, £4.70. exacta: £28.10. trifecta: £479.40. CSF: £17.62.

Placepot: £133.10

(Race 1) 1, 8, 6; (2) 4, 2, 8; (3) 5, 7, 6; (4) 6, 1, 3; (5) 7, 1, 10; (6) 3, 7, 11;

Quadpot: £18.20

SAM GETS TO PLAY IT AGAIN

Darnold's the final day hero as Seahawks grab No.1 seed

BY **KEITH WEBSTER**

SAM DARNOLD had to wait 12 months but when deja vu came calling, he had redemption for the worst day of his career.

In the final game of the regular season last year, Darnold was playing quarterback for Minnesota against Detroit, with the No.1 seeding in the playoffs up for grabs.

He blew it and a week later, Minnesota crashed out of the playoffs at the first hurdle, their Super Bowl hopes wrecked.

On Saturday night, Darnold, now calling the shots at Seattle, found himself in exactly the same situation as the Seahawks travelled down the west coast to San Francisco, beat them in the stadium that will host next month's Super Bowl, and walked away with the No.1 seeding and a bye in next week's playoff first round.

It also sees Seattle playing at home throughout the playoffs and therefore very much favourites to win it all.

Following the 13-3 win over the 49ers, Darnold was trying to stay composed, all too aware of that stinging meltdown in two consecutive games last year.

"I'm taking it one day at a time," he said. "It's been a whirlwind, just the NFL season, just preparing one week at a time.

"That's the best part about it. You celebrate a win like this and then tomorrow you might celebrate a little bit too, because you have a bye. But then we're right back to seeing what we can do better and how we can get better for the next game. That's the beautiful thing about the NFL and what we do."

Seahawks fans who cheer them on at Seattle's Lumen Field are known as the loudest in the NFL and Darnold is glad to have secured homefield advantage because of what their 'extra man' can do for the players.

"It's huge to be able to play in front of the 12s," he said. "It's unlike any other stadium that I've ever played in in terms of how loud it can be and how tough it could be for [the opposition]. We're really looking forward to playing at home."

Darnold's turnaround in 12 months was not lost on his team-mates. "Sam led us today," said receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba. "Sam was an absolute dog. His demeanour, his approach. Everything about what he did was great.

"The way he prepared all week to make sure his guys were ready, I'm super happy for him.

"That's our leader. We're going to follow our leader, we're going to follow his approach and his mindset, and he has the right mindset to do great things for us."

San Francisco had already qualified for the playoffs but lost the chance to have the No.1 seeding and instead will not only have to play in the wild card round next weekend but will have to go on the road instead of being at home.

BITTER MEMORY Jahmyr Gibbs' touchdown helped Lions sink Darnold's Vikings last season

HE'S DARN GOOD! Quarterback Sam Darnold celebrates after helping Seattle clinch the division title in San Francisco

WORLD OF SPORT

Raducanu sits it out as Brits beat Japan

TENNIS

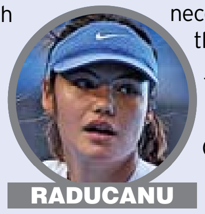
EMMA RADUCANU'S absence did not trouble Great Britain too much as they started their United Cup campaign with a 2-1 win over Japan in Perth.

The British No.1 was set for her first match since October, but she pulled out of her clash against Naomi Osaka.

No official reason was given for her withdrawal but with just a fortnight to go until the start of the Australian Open, GB team captain Tim Henman hinted at a cautious approach over Raducanu's fitness. "She was very, very close," said Henman. "It was not an easy decision. She had been building up well.

"I don't think she is necessarily out of this tournament just yet."

Katie Swan lost 7-6 6-1 to Osaka after Billy Harris beat Shintaro Mochizuki 7-6 6-3. In the deciding mixed doubles, Neal Skupski and Olivia Nicholls overcame Yasutaka Uchiyama and Nao Hibino in a tense match tie-break, winning 7-5 4-6 10-7.


RADUCANU

THE BIG PICTURE

FREEZE FRAME: A winter swimmer jumps into the water in Harbin, China

Banging the drum to avoid games in India

CRICKET

BANGLADESH have asked to play their upcoming T20 World Cup fixtures outside of India amid strained relations between the countries.

The Tigers are scheduled to play three matches in Kolkata next month before rounding off their group stage campaign in Mumbai.

However, Bangladesh left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman was released by Indian Premier League side Kolkata Knight Riders at the instruction of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Saturday. That led to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) petitioning the International Cricket Council (ICC) to have those games moved elsewhere.

It threatens to throw the event, which starts on February 7, into further confusion, with Pakistan playing all their matches in Sri Lanka because of tensions with India.

10 to tackle

1. Who won the F1 2025 Qatar Grand Prix sprint classification?
2. At what sport does Bruce Mouat represent Scotland and Great Britain?
3. Who scored two tries for Bristol Bears in the 2025-2026 PREM home win over Northampton Saints?
4. Which English football team plays at the Emirates Stadium?
5. Which cricket trophy became the NatWest Bank Trophy in 1981?
6. Which boxer was BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 1985?
7. Who was runner-up in the World Professional Snooker Championship in 1982?
8. Evonne Goolagong won the ladies singles title at Wimbledon in 1971, but what was her surname when she won it nine years later?
9. Which Englishman was runner-up in the first World Darts Championships, held in 1978?
10. In what year did Francesco Molinari win the Open Championship, becoming the first Italian professional to win a major?

RATINGS
0-3 Oh dear
4-6 Small beer
7-9 So near
10 Sporting Seer

ANSWERS: 1 Oscar Piastri 2 Curling 3 Kieran Marmion 4 Arsenal 5 Gillette Cup 6 Barry McGuigan 7 Ray Reardon 8 Cawley 9 John Lowe 10 2018

RADWAN RUNS RIOT
Tigers winger Adam Radwan goes over for the third try of the match

Leicester pile pain on sorry Sarries

HIGH OF THE TIGERS

GRIN & BEAR IT
Tigers' Ollie Chessum and Saracens' Maro Itoje

LEICESTER	36
SARACENS	28

BY **ADAM HATHAWAY**

ADAM RADWAN showed Saracens a clean pair of heels as Leicester racked up their biggest score against Saracens in 17 years to stay in touch with the top four.

The winger scored twice and had one chalked off as he outpaced the Londoners in front of England attack coach Lee Blackett just weeks before the Six Nations.

Radwan won two caps in 2021, under Eddie Jones, scoring four tries.

But he has barely had a sniff since and at 28 time is running out.

His first try came courtesy of a Billy Searle kick through and he finished it with an acrobatic dive. His second was a 70m run-in after intercepting Ivan van Zyl's pass.

In between he had another scorching finish disallowed for a Jack van Poortvliet knock-on in the build-up. The former Newcastle man made it six tries in the league this season and although England boss Steve Borthwick has plenty of wings to choose from he must be knocking on the door.

Leicester boss Geoff Parling said: "He is a great talent. He has been pretty rounded all this season – defensively he has been good and he has been good in the air and he is explosive.

"He has to make it so he can't not be picked. That is the challenge for any player, to play so well consistently that a coach can't not pick him."

The win leaves Leicester fifth just two points off Bristol in the final play-off spot. It was a bitter blow for Saracens, who are sixth points off fourth with half the regular season done.

Owen Farrell was pulled out of the 23 with a hamstring injury and Saracens could have done with his leadership as they were never at the races in the first period.

The only thing consistent about the six-times champions has been their inconsistency and after last week's win at Gloucester this was another dip.

Boss Mark McCall said: "We haven't had back-to-back wins in the Prem since rounds one and two and every good performance has been followed by something like that.

"As a team we want to know what we are going to get every week and at the moment we don't.

"You can't turn up to this place and have the attitude we had for the first 15 or 20 minutes. There was only one team up for the physical battle."

Saracens had a nightmare first half, 26-7 down at the break after losing Jamie George and Nick Isiekwe to HIAs and Elliot Daly for 10 minutes in the bin.

They won the second half and came away with a bonus point thanks to Charlie Bracken's score at the death.

Leicester: Tries: Steward, Cracknell, Radwan (2), Heyes; Cons: Searle (4); Pen: Searle

Saracens: Tries: McFarland, Carre, Gonzalez, Bracken; Cons: Burke (4)

QUINS BOSSES POISED AS SAINTS DEFEAT ADDS PAIN

GALLAGHER PREM: ROUND-UP

BY **ADAM HATHAWAY**

HARLEQUINS chiefs have threatened to swing the axe if results do not improve in the wake of their 10-try 66-21 hammering by Northampton on Saturday.

That humiliation meant Quins have conceded 149 points in their last three games and they have won just two out of nine in the Prem.

Their coaching team was disrupted early in the season when head coach Danny Wilson left for Wales with Jason Gilmore being promoted to replace him.

After the Saints defeat Gilmore, who has overseen a run of seven defeats in eight games, said the run of form was 'not sustainable' and the board are ready to act if things do not improve.

A club statement said: "Performances and results in the men's team are not at the level we expect at Harlequins and are not considered acceptable by anyone within the club. Whilst some elements of change will take a relatively short period of time to implement, others will take longer. It is critical that such change is carefully considered and will evidently deliver the performance levels we are committed to."

Northampton went back to the top of the table but Bath, who they beat 41-21 at the Rec in the previous round, are two points behind in second.

The champions were 26 points up in their clash with Exeter on Saturday before chucking away the lead only for their back row Arthur Green to pull a 33-26 win out of the bag with a last-gasp score.

No.8 Alfie Barbeary (right) revealed the humiliation of that reverse to Saints had inspired their fast start where they grabbed a try bonus point in the first quarter.

He said: "You saw in the first 20 minutes we were hurt. We don't lose at home often."

Ashes brings Crawley's faults into sharp focus

VAUGHAN: I'M SO FRUSTRATED BY ZAK'S LAPSES IN CONCENTRATION

BY **DAVID CHARLESWORTH** and **RORY DOLLARD**

ON a day when supporters vented their frustration at ground staff and umpires over an early finish, Michael Vaughan was left just as perplexed by Zak Crawley.

The former England captain admitted the opening batsman "frustrates the life out of me" and pinpointed his concentration levels as his overriding weak spot.

Crawley bounced back from a pair in Perth and topped England's run charts in this series ahead of the fifth Test, albeit averaging 32, fractionally higher than his modest career mark.

He appeared at ease in Sydney on the opening morning, initially showing good judgement before playing all around a Michael Neser nip-backer to be lbw for 16 as England lurched to 57-3,

It needed a lasting partnership from Yorkshire pair Joe Root and Harry Brook to rescue the day.

But another Crawley failure left an exasperated Vaughan to say: "Zak Crawley frustrates the life out of me because he looks so comfortable and he was playing the right way.

"But that ball that got him out should not get him out. There must be something in his concentration because I watch him closely and I think 'he's such a good player' and then he just gets out.

CHEAP WICKET Australia celebrate Crawley's dismissal

"That's been the story of his career. The reason why he averages 31 in Test match cricket is because his concentration levels aren't the strongest."

Vaughan this summer labelled Crawley the "luckiest" player to have won so many Test caps because of his inconsistent displays but England have stuck with him through thick and thin.

Vaughan, though, believes Crawley, who has long been primed for this tour of Australia, is worth persevering with if he can apply himself more.

Vaughan added: "He frustrates the life out of me because I know there's a lot more in the tank and I do think England have to stay with him.

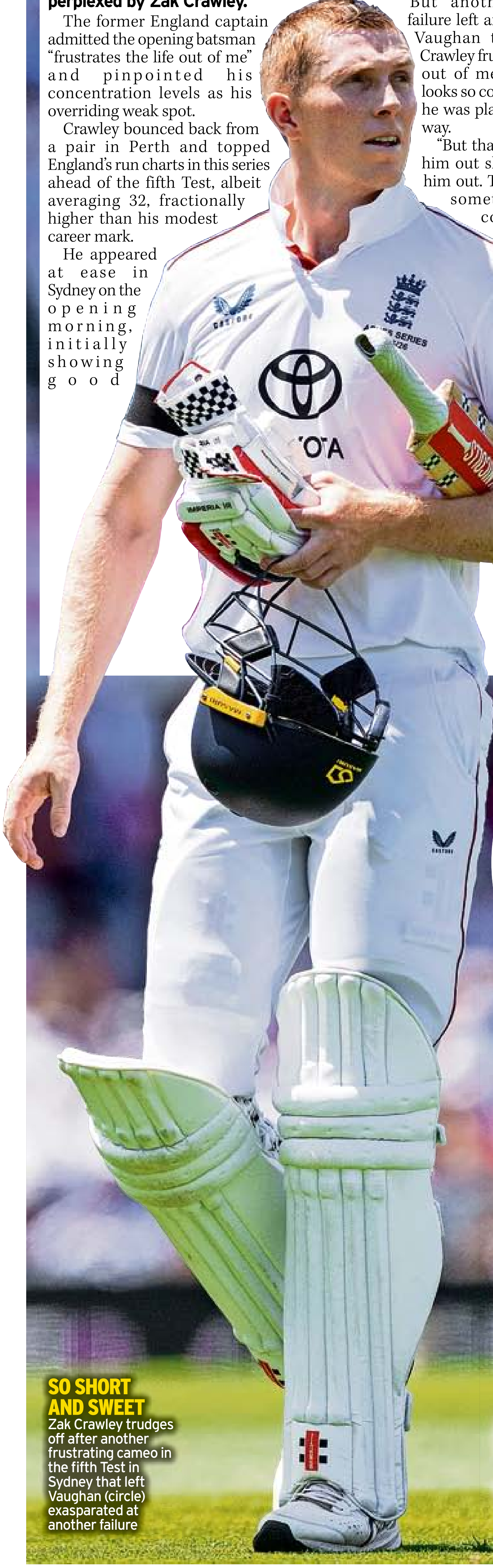
"He needs to understand the concentration levels at this level to go on and average 40-45 over the next two or three years, which I think he could do if he finds that concentration. But he is very frustrating. There is a bigger average in Zak Crawley than what he is giving at the minute"

Brook spent much of the opening day with Australian bowlers testing his supposed weakness against bouncers.

That was until he hit Cameron Green so far and high into the crowd that he threatened to take a chunk out of the big screen.

Brook said: "It's a ploy which has been used against me in my whole career. I've experienced it a lot and I'm expecting to experience it a lot in the future.

"I could have played it better. It didn't feel amazing today so I'm happy I got through it. I've got to be patient at times, if that's taking my ones instead of trying to hit boundaries, then so be it. It's obviously not worked this series because I haven't scored as many runs as I'd have liked."



SO SHORT AND SWEET Zak Crawley trudges off after another frustrating cameo in the fifth Test in Sydney that left Vaughan (circle) exasparated at another failure

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RETURN Former world heavyweight champ Fury

Tyson is back for more hits

BOXING

BY **DAVID CHARLESWORTH**

TYSON FURY will return to boxing in 2026 after claiming he has nothing better to do than "punch men in the face for a living".

After a second points loss to heavyweight rival Oleksandr Usyk for three of the four major world titles in December 2024, Fury confirmed the end of his professional career the following month.

But Fury, who said he was bowing out of the sport after beating Dillian Whyte in April 2022 only to return later in the year, posted on Instagram: "2026 is that year. Return of the mac.

"Been away for a while but I'm back now, 37 years old and still punching. Nothing better to do than punch men in the face and get paid for it."

Fury's history of retirement followed by a U-turn meant few believed his most recent claim to end a career that had brought 34 wins in 37 contests and a couple of stints as a world champion.

He was incensed at the judges' decisions in his twin defeats by Usyk, the only boxer to beat Fury, who said in last year's retirement message: "I'm going to end with this: Dick Turpin wore a mask."

But the Gypsy King fuelled speculation of another comeback over the festive period by posting several clips of himself in training.

Fury has been repeatedly linked with a long-awaited all-British bout against Anthony Joshua. But the car crash in Nigeria which left Joshua injured and led to the deaths of two close friends has likely put boxing on the back burner for the 36-year-old.

RUGBY LEAGUE: WOLVES RECRUIT

FROM A TIGER TO A WOLF Warrington new boy Josh Smith is raring to go

JOSH CAN THRIVE AT WOLVES

BY **JOSH McALLISTER**

WARRINGTON WOLVES' new signing Josh Smith says he will be doing everything in his power to establish himself as a Super League regular after arriving as a relative unknown.

The 24-year-old has penned a two-year deal ahead of the 2026 campaign, joining from Brisbane Tigers in the Queensland Cup, where he scored 10 tries in 20 appearances last season.

Smith was voted the club's player of the year in 2025 and soon attracted interest from the Wolves.

"I heard Warrington were interested around September – and I know it's a club that wants success," Smith said.

"The conversation I had with (director of rugby) Gary Chambers and (head coach) Sam Burgess (below) was one that definitely struck me as an opportunity I wanted to take up. It's been great so far – I've loved it.

"Super League has always been on my radar, it's always been something I wanted to do.

"My goal is to play, and I know what I can bring to a footy team. Nothing beats the team goal of wanting to win trophies, but a personal goal of mine is to get a good crack in round one and stay there the whole season and kick on."

Smith boasts strong yardage carries in his game and adds competition to Burgess' outside-back options, with Albert Hopoate also arriving from the NRL on a two-year contract.

The pair trained together through Canberra Raiders' pathways before embarking on their own careers in Australia.

Hopoate, 24, has been handed the No.4 shirt at the Halliwell Jones Stadium, Smith will don shirt No.26.

In total, strong-running centre Smith has made 76 appearances in the Queensland Cup since his debut in 2021, scoring 41 tries. He also made three appearances for Canberra's New South Wales Cup outfit in 2022.

"The competition has been good, we've really been pushing each other," added Smith, who also previously represented the Mackay Cutters in Queensland.

"Across the backline, we've got boys like Matty Ashton coming back, Cai Taylor-Wray at full-back, Josh Thewlis, who can also play full-back.

"There's good players all across the backline and it's one I'm excited to get into. That's the goal."

DARTS: WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

GOT, GOT,

WEIGHT OF THE WORLD Champion Luke Littler tries to hoist up the Sid Waddell Trophy

Luke vows to Phil his boots

LUKE LITTLER has warned his darts rivals that he has the hunger to chase down Phil Taylor's record of 16 world titles.

When asked about reaching Taylor's breath-taking record, Littler, 18, replied: "I think I could if I stay around for long enough and keep the hunger.

"Like Michael van Gerwen says, once the hunger goes, there's no point playing. But there's a lot of hunger left."

Taylor (inset) lifted the BDO world title twice and the PDC World Championship 14 times but, considering he retired at 64, Littler may have 46 years to overtake him.

Over 36 sets of darts his opponents took only four sets from Littler between them during the tournament. Most chillingly of all, he believes he is still improving.

He added: "I've definitely got better, the stats show it.

"The past few days, it's been very good and we can look forward to the new year."

Dutchman Van Veen has already broken into the Premier League, having surged up to world No.3, but he admitted Littler was irresistible.

When asked if 'Luke the Nuke' felt unstoppable, Van Veen said: "It felt like it. He pressures you on every leg. Luke Humphries and Gary Anderson always put you under pressure, but Littler is different pressure."

NEED

ATTITUDE
DAVID BECKHAM
GOLDEN BALLER
CRISTIANO RONALDO

How do you celebrate becoming double world champ and banking £1m? By splashing out on football trading cards, of course

IT IS the morning after the mauling and Luke Littler is a man very much in demand.

But with every question thrown at him from media outlets at home and abroad, there is no panic to rush out an answer.

Every reply is considered, even if he might have had only a few hours of sleep after ordering "£150 worth of pizzas in for everyone", has not been home since Boxing Day and his beloved Manchester United would soon be kicking off against Leeds.

Twelve hours earlier, Littler was equally impressive and not just in his stunning destruction of Gian van Veen to retain the Sid Waddell Trophy and become only the fourth player to win the PDC World Championship back to back.

The world – with as much interest in New Zealand as in Newmarket – might have seen 'Luke the Nuke' at his best to win the final 7-1 at Alexandra Palace in 43 minutes of spectacular darts.

But it was amid the cacophony of noise, flashing lights and the chanting from those in a 'Littler Wonderland' as he secured victory that the teenager showed a side of himself that says everything about him as a person.

Never mind the glory, never mind the matter of a £1m first prize. Littler, 18, had other matters on his mind as he spoke on stage.

He wanted to hail retiring referee George Noble and MC John McDonald and make sure he paid his own tribute to Anthony Joshua and the tragic events of last week's car accident.

"I had it in mind to speak about George and John and to give my feelings to Anthony Joshua and what happened in Nigeria," said Littler yesterday.

It was impressive stuff from an impressive young man who is dealing with his fame and fortune in an impressive manner.

He added: "I don't need to change. This is me as I am. I'm just a darts player.

"People call me a celebrity, but I'm just a boy living his dream."

He will head home with the incredible record of having played 20 matches on the stage of the Ally Pally in the past three years and lost only once, to Luke Humphries in the final in 2024.

His million-pound prize makes it £1.7m alone from the World Championship, but, along with treating his family to a holiday in Dubai, where he will celebrate his birthday after this month's Masters in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, Littler will do what any other teenager might do.

BY **RICHARD LEWIS**

He will increase his collection of football cards, a hobby he has thanks to his friendship with King of the Jungle 'Angryginge'.

Littler said: "Panini cards, Topps Cards, anything. It's Ginge's fault really, he got me into (trading account) Whatnot. You bid and they will open a box and they say, 'You get Cristiano Ronaldo, you get a Ronaldo card'. I will treat myself.

"It's a lot of money. As a family, we've never experienced these numbers, never mind whatever else I have won. But that's why I don't have my big bank account. If I ever need any money, I'll message my dad and he can send it over."

Manchester United goalkeeper Senne Lammens was among those who sent Littler messages of congratulations, support which he says means so much to him, after a final that had the makings of being close.

Dutch No.1 Van Veen won the opening leg with a finish of 112 and could have gone two sets up on a night where he contributed so much to the brilliance of the evening. But once Littler hit back when he moved 2-1 ahead with a sensational 170, the final was only going one way.

"Coming into the tournament, everybody was talking about the prize money, but for myself, (it was) going back to back," said Littler.

"It was a decade ago since Gary (Anderson) did it. All eyes were on me."

All eyes will remain on him, too, because darts in particular and sport in general has an ambassador it can be proud to have.

Nuke clear power!

HOW LETHAL LUKE DOMINATED FINAL

LUKE LITTLER		GIAN VAN VEEN
106.02	AVERAGE	99.94
42	100+	39
19	140+	18
16	180s	9
170	HIGHEST CHECKOUT	145
4	CHECKOUTS 100+	4
46%	CHECKOUT PERCENTAGE	38.1%
23/50	CHECKOUTS	8/21

PRIZE PAIR Luke Littler lifts the trophy with I'm a Celebrity king Angryginge

Littler's 12-month trophy cabinet

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
Luke Littler became the first player since Gary Anderson in 2016 to retain his Alexandra Palace title after he hammered Gian van Veen 7-1 in the final.

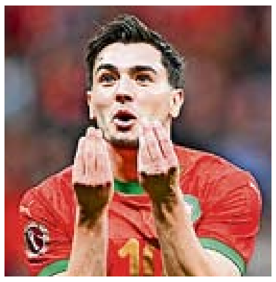
UK OPEN
Dubbed the 'FA Cup of darts', Littler proved he had the magic with a masterful 11-2 final win over James Wade to claim a maiden title at Butlin's Minehead.

WORLD MATCHPLAY
Second to the World Championship in terms of prestige, Littler got his hands on the World Matchplay with an 18-13 victory over Wade.

GRAND PRIX
The double-in format troubled 'The Nuke' in his debut tournament in 2024, but he put it right at the second time of asking when beating great rival Luke Humphries 6-1 in the final.

GRAND SLAM OF DARTS
Littler completed the first defence of a title after sweeping his way to a second successive victory in Wolverhampton, again downing Humphries in the final.

PLAYERS CHAMPIONSHIP
There was some more Minehead magic as Littler continued his winning streak with an 11-8 triumph in the final over Nathan Aspinall.



HANDY Diaz after his winner

It's a Real fine night for Diaz

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

REAL MADRID winger Diaz fired Morocco into the last eight of the Africa Cup of Nations with a 1-0 win over Tanzania.

Diaz struck in the 64th minute, lashing home at the near post from an acute angle.

It was a far from convincing display but the 1976 champions are one step closer to a second African title.

Tanzania managed just one shot on target, with Mohamed Hussein denied by Morocco keeper Yassine Bounou.

Diaz has scored in every match at AFCON and is a leading contender for the Player of the Tournament.

Tanzania, who have never won a game in the Nations Cup, looked adventurous and aggressive without the ball. But Diaz proved the difference, squeezing the ball past Hussein Masalanga at his near post.

It sends Morocco to just their third quarter-final since reaching the final in 2004.

"The competition is hotting up and we faced our toughest opponent in this Tanzania team," Diaz said.

"Not everything worked, we know that, but fortunately we managed to secure our qualification. Now, we are going back to work to be fully ready for the quarter-finals."

Cameroon will be their opponents after beating South Africa 2-1 in Rabat.

Junior Tchamadeu and Christian Kofane scored to put the Indomitable Lions within sight of victory before a late strike from Evidence Makgopa gave South Africa hope.

LOVING IT Kofane's goal joy

EMBRACE Amorim and Farke at the final whistle

BORE OF

It was billed as
turned into a
in one of the
anti-climaxes

HE CUN DELIVER
Cunha slots home the equaliser for the visitors and (below, right) celebrates

LEEDING THE WAY
Aaronson fires beyond keeper Lammens for the opener

LEEDS UTD Aaronson 62	1
MAN UTD Cunha 65	1

BY **JEREMY CROSS**

THIS was supposed to be a 'War of the Roses'.

But it resembled more of a pillow fight between two rivals who wilted in the winter sunshine.

And even two goals in three second-half minutes couldn't add much gloss to what turned into one of the biggest anti-climaxes of the season.

It ended honours even, with Matheus Cunha salvaging a point for Manchester United, after Brenden Aaronson had put the home side ahead.

And the outcome will have left a bitter taste in the mouths of respective managers Daniel Farke and Ruben Amorim.

Farke knows Leeds will have rarely had a better chance to beat bitter rivals they haven't got the better of in the league since 2002.

The point will do nothing to ease the pressure on Amorim, whose side have now failed to overcome rock-bottom Wolves, and a newly-promoted side, in their last two outings.

Farke had insisted this was 'more than a game', due to the long history of vitriol and hatred which existed between these trans-Pennine clubs.

But animosities of the past failed to make the present, on an afternoon that will live short in the memories.

Amorim was getting his first taste of one of the most explosive fixtures in football and he appeared to have arrived at Elland Road on a mission to circle the wagons.

Of the 10 outfield players he named in his side, eight of them were defence-minded while lone striker Benjamin Sesko had scored just twice in 15 league games this season.

Leeds were without influential captain Ethan Ampadu, who was suspended, and the hosts had had 48 hours less to prepare for this clash than United had. But Farke must have taken one look at the United team sheet and thought the visitors were there for the taking.

Not least because his Leeds team were bursting with confidence, having thumped Chelsea here as part of a six-game unbeaten run.

This was just the fifth time in 22 years Leeds had hosted United – and home supporters were determined to make the most of it.

It was just a shame Farke's players didn't seem to have the same enthusiasm.

The hosts were lacklustre, meaning United didn't have much of a storm to weather.

Sesko had a shot blocked and Manuel Ugarte headed just wide, while Dominic Calvert-Lewin screwed a shot off target.

Calvert-Lewin also saw a glancing header come back of the right-hand post.

Lucas Perri produced a superb, instinctive save to tip over Leny Yorro's header from point-

THE ROSES

a war but pillow fight biggest of the season

PREMIER LEAGUE

LEEDS UTD		MAN UTD
45%	POSSESSION	55%
3	SHOTS ON TARGET	2
6	SHOTS OFF TARGET	8
420	TOTAL PASSES	526
6	CORNERS	4
1	OFFSIDES	3
9	FOULS	9
0 0	CARDS	1 0

REF: JARRED GILLETT **ATT:** 36,909

LINE-UPS

LEEDS UTD (3-5-2): Perri; Bornauw (Gnonto 80), Bijol, Struijk; Justin, Aaronson (Piroe 87), Gruev (Tanaka 80), Stach, Gudmundsson; Calvert-Lewin, Okafor (Nmecha 75)

MANCHESTER UNITED (3-4-2-1): Lammens; Yoro (Zirkzee 64), Heaven, Martinez; Dalot, Ugarte, Casemiro, Shaw; Dorgu, Cunha; Sesko

MAN OF THE MATCH
BRENDEN AARONSON

ANGRY AMORIM ON THE ATTACK

FROM BACK PAGE

the manager of Manchester United – not the head coach. Manchester United and it is going to be like this for 18 months, or (until) when the board decides to change."

Amorim also took a dig at the club's scouts and sporting director Jason Wilcox – telling them to get on with their own jobs.

He added: "It's going to be like this until the board decide to change. I'm not going to quit.

"I will do my job until another guy comes to replace me. If people cannot handle the Gary Nevilles and the criticism of everything, we need to change the club. I just want to say that. I came here to be the manager of Manchester United, not to be the coach.

"And every department, the scouting department, the sporting director, needs to do their job.

"I will do mine for 18 months and then we will watch." The draw at Elland Road made it seven games unbeaten for improving Leeds – their longest without defeat in the top flight since 2001.

Whites boss Daniel Farke (left) said: "We are a bit disappointed because it was possible to win the game.

"It says a lot when you are disappointed with just one point against Manchester United, as a promoted side."

blank range but the first half was memorable for how forgettable it was. And then a game broke out. Kind of.

SO NEAR Calvert-Lewin is unlucky as his header hits the post

Aaronson put Leeds ahead, catching Ayden Heaven cold to beat him to a hopeful ball forward and finish past Senne Lammens.

But the lead lasted a mere three minutes before Elland Road was sent into silence.

Cunha latched on to a pass from substitute Joshua Zirkzee, before beating the stranded Perri with a slide-rule finish to make it 1-1.

Lammens did well to keep out Noah Okafor's overhead kick, while Sesko missed a sitter at the opposite end.

Cunha also hit a post with 10 minutes remaining.

But in truth, this very disappointing game didn't deserve to have a winner.

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	20	15	3	2	40	14	48
Man City	20	13	3	4	44	18	42
Aston Villa	20	13	3	4	33	24	42
Liverpool	20	10	4	6	32	28	34
Chelsea	20	8	7	5	33	22	31
Man Utd	20	8	7	5	34	30	31
Brentford	20	9	3	8	32	28	30
Sunderland	20	7	9	4	21	19	30
Newcastle	20	8	5	7	28	24	29
Brighton	20	7	7	6	30	27	28
Fulham	20	8	4	8	28	29	28
Everton	20	8	4	8	22	24	28
Tottenham	20	7	6	7	28	24	27
C Palace	20	7	6	7	22	23	27
Bournemouth	20	5	8	7	31	38	23
Leeds	20	5	7	8	26	33	22
Nottm Forest	20	5	3	12	19	33	18
West Ham	20	3	5	12	21	41	14
Burnley	20	3	3	14	20	39	12
Wolves	20	1	3	16	14	40	6

RESULTS & FIXTURES

African Cup Of Nations - Round of 16

MOROCCO (0)........1 TANZANIA (0).......0
Diaz 64
SOUTH AFRICA (0).1 CAMEROON (1).....2
Makgopa 88 Tchamadeu 34 Kofane 47

BASKETBALL

SLB: Sheffield Sharks 88 Surrey 89ers 94.

SLB Trophy Semi-Final Second Leg: Bristol Flyers 76 London Lions 77 (London Lions win 154-134 on aggregate), Cheshire Phoenix 112 Newcastle Eagles 105 (Newcastle Eagles win 205-201 on aggregate).

NBA: Miami Heat 115 Minnesota Timberwolves 125, NY Knicks 119 Philadelphia 76ers 130, Toronto Raptors 134 Atlanta Hawks 117, Chicago Bulls 99 Charlotte Hornets 112, San Antonio Spurs 110 Portland Trail Blazers 115, Dallas Mavericks 110 Houston Rockets 104, Golden State Warriors 123 Utah Jazz 114, LA Clippers 115 Boston Celtics 146.

ICE HOCKEY

ELITE LEAGUE: Coventry Blaze 4 Belfast Giants 3, Dundee Stars 4 Guildford Flames 3, Fife Flyers 4 Manchester Storm 5 (SO), Nottingham Panthers 4 Glasgow Clan 1.

NHL: Detroit Red Wings 1 Pittsburgh Penguins 4, Columbus Blue Jackets 5 Buffalo Sabres 1, New Jersey Devils 4 Utah Mammoth 1, Edmonton Oilers 2 Philadelphia Flyers 5, San Jose Sharks 3 Tampa Bay Lightning 7, St. Louis Blues 2 Montreal Canadiens 0, Carolina Hurricanes 3 Colorado Avalanche 5, Washington Capitals 2 Chicago Blackhawks 3 (SO), NY Islanders 4 Toronto Maple Leafs 3 (OT), Calgary Flames 3 Nashville Predators 4, Ottawa Senators 4 Winnipeg Jets 2, Los Angeles Kings 5 Minnesota Wild 4 (SO), Vancouver Canucks 2 Boston Bruins 3 (OT).

RUGBY UNION

Gallagher Prem Rugby

BATH.................. 33 EXETER.............. 26
Bath—T: Obano, Barbeary, Carreras, Lawrence, Greene. **C**: Russell (4). **Exeter—T**: Dweba, Woodburn, Fisilau, Feyi-Waboso. **C**: Slade (3).

NORTH'PTON ...... 66 HARLEQUINS....... 21
Northampton—T: Fischetti (2), Coles (3), Mitchell, Freeman, Todaro (2), F. Smith. **C**: F. Smith (8). **Harlequins—T**: Cleaves, Dombrandt (2). **C**: Smith (3).

YESTERDAY

LEICESTER.......... 36 SARACENS.......... 28
Leicester—T: Steward, Cracknell, Radwan (2), Heyes. **C**: Searle (4). **P**: Searle. **Saracens—T**: McFarland, Carre, Gonzalez, C. Bracken. **C**: Burke (4).

	P	W	D	L	B	F	A	Pts
North'pton	9	7	1	1	8	347	253	38
Bath	9	7	0	2	8	313	211	36
Exeter	9	6	1	2	8	269	171	34
Bristol	9	7	0	2	5	282	232	33
Leicester	9	6	0	3	7	267	231	31
Saracens	9	4	0	5	11	310	234	27
Sale	9	3	0	6	7	256	254	19
Harlequins	9	2	0	7	2	189	317	10
Gloucester	9	1	0	8	5	188	305	9
Newcastle	9	1	0	8	1	153	366	5

United Rugby Championship

B TREVISO .... 14 EDINBURGH........ 15
GLASGOW........... 47 ZEBRE................. 10
LEINSTER............ 52 CONNACHT 17
SHARKS.............. 22 LIONS................. 23
STORMERS .... 13 BLUE BULLS 8

	P	W	D	L	B	F	A	Pts
Stormers	8	8	0	0	4	231	95	36
Glasgow	9	7	0	2	6	253	112	34
Ulster	8	6	0	2	7	259	167	31
Cardiff	9	6	0	3	7	201	174	31
Leinster	9	6	0	3	6	239	191	30
Munster	9	6	0	3	6	183	167	30
Lions	8	4	0	4	5	226	234	21
B Treviso	9	4	0	5	3	173	229	19
Ospreys	9	3	1	5	4	196	226	18
Edinburgh	8	3	0	5	5	158	147	17
Blue Bulls	8	3	0	5	4	192	224	16
Connacht	8	2	0	6	8	189	220	16
Dragons	9	2	2	5	4	179	230	16
Sharks	8	2	1	5	4	156	215	14
Zebre	9	2	0	7	3	154	287	11
Scarlets	8	2	0	6	1	126	197	9

SNOOKER

WST BETVICTOR CH'SHIP LGE
(Mattioli Arena, Leicester)—**Gp 2:** E Slessor (Eng) bt N Saengkham (Tha) 3-0; G Wilson (Eng) bt D Gilbert (Eng) 3-2; J O'Connor (Eng) bt J Page (Wal) 3-1; G Wilson (Eng) bt C Wakelin (Eng) 3-0; N Saengkham (Tha) bt D Gilbert (Eng) 3-2; E Slessor (Eng) bt J O'Connor (Eng) 3-1; C Wakelin (Eng) bt J Page (Wal) 3-1; N Saengkham (Tha) bt G Wilson (Eng) 3-2; D Gilbert (Eng) bt E Slessor (Eng) 3-0; C Wakelin (Eng) bt J O'Connor (Eng) 3-1; G Wilson (Eng) bt J Page (Wal) 3-0; J O'Connor (Eng) bt N Saengkham (Tha) 3-2.

TODAY'S DIARY

African Cup Of Nations - Round of 16

Egypt v Benin (4pm)................................
Nigeria v Mozambique (7pm)...................

Sky Bet Championship

Leicester v West Brom (8pm)..................
(Live on Sky Sports Football)

CRICKET

5th Test—day 2 of 5: Australia v England (Sydney, 11.30pm).

HOBBLER Gvardiol could be out for a 'few weeks'

Injuries piling up for Pep

FROM BACK PAGE

equaliser deep into added time. And to add to Guardiola's disappointment, the City manager saw his two starting centre-halves go off injured during a game his side led through a Tijjani Reijnders strike in the first half.

"It does not look good for Josko [Gvardiol] or Ruben [Dias] - I think they will be on the sidelines for a few weeks," said Guardiola.

"Of course I have concerns. You saw the bench today - we had three players from the academy. Now, we will have more.

"But we will stay strong and we will find a solution. The spirit is there."

For McFarlane, it was a magical end to what could well be his one and only game as a Premier League manager.

He said: "For me, it was amazing, stuff you dream about. Pep Guardiola, Premier League game, amazing.

"But it should be about the players, and how well they performed.

"It shouldn't be about me, it should be about the quality performance those lads put on with everything that has gone on."

Rosenior will meet with Chelsea executives today after flying into London yesterday and is expected to be in charge of the game at Fulham on Wednesday.

On the same night, Brighton are at City, who now trail Arsenal by six points at the top.

But Guardiola - missing numerous players due to injury and AFCON - thought the performance against Chelsea was "fantastic".

He said: "We missed chances in the second half, four or five actions of two versus one or three versus two. But we played a fantastic game against a top team."

CAL'S BIG CALL

PREMIER LEAGUE

MAN CITY		CHELSEA
58%	POSSESSION	42%
3	SHOTS ON TARGET	3
6	SHOTS OFF TARGET	4
573	TOTAL PASSES	420
8	CORNERS	2
2	OFFSIDE	2
12	FOULS	14
0 3	CARDS	3 0

REF: Michael Oliver

LINE-UPS

MAN CITY (4-3-2-1): Donnarumma; Nunes, Dias (Ake 81), Gvardiol (Khusanov 51), O'Reilly; Silva, Rodri, Reijnders (Doku 70); Cherki, Foden; Haaland

CHELSEA (4-2-3-1): Jorgensen; Acheampong (Hato 62), Chalobah, Badiashile, Gusto; James, Fernandez; Estevado (Santos 46), Palmer, Neto; Pedro (Delap 62)

MAN OF THE MATCH
RODRI

BIG DAY OUT McFarlane waves to the Chelsea fans

MAN CITY	1
Reijnders 42	
CHELSEA	1
Fernandez 90+4	

McFarlane steps in to give Gunners major boost at top

BY **ANDY DUNN**

HOPEFULLY, Calum McFarlane will enjoy a successful career in coaching and, possibly, management.

But if he never steps into any sort of limelight again, at least he could well have one small claim to fame.

The interim Chelsea boss – and that is very interim, considering Liam Rosenior is about to pick up the poisoned chalice – will be able to say he masterminded an unlikely fightback that put Arsenal in the driving seat in the Premier League title race.

It might have been verging on the blindingly obvious to send on Liam Delap, formerly of City, when Chelsea needed a goal with half an hour to go, but it changed the mood of the occasion.

Delap got City, who lost both centre-halves to injury during proceedings, well and truly rattled.

And while he did not score the equaliser deep into added time – that was accomplished by Enzo Fernandez after a half-save from Gianluigi Donnarumma – Delap was on the premises and causing consternation in home ranks.

And Delap's commitment was

COULD TILT TITLE

IT ENZ WELL FOR CHELSEA Enzo Fernandes grabs last-gasp equaliser at the Bridge

PUSHING FOR A WIN City's Bernardo Silva squares up to Chelsea's Liam Delap

PREMIER LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	20	15	3	2	40	14	48
Man City	20	13	3	4	44	18	42
Aston Villa	20	13	3	4	33	24	42
Liverpool	20	10	4	6	32	28	34
Chelsea	20	8	7	5	33	22	31
Man Utd	20	8	7	5	34	30	31
Brentford	20	9	3	8	32	28	30
Sunderland	20	7	9	4	21	19	30
Newcastle	20	8	5	7	28	24	29
Brighton	20	7	7	6	30	27	28
Fulham	20	8	4	8	28	29	28
Everton	20	8	4	8	22	24	28
Tottenham	20	7	6	7	28	24	27
C Palace	20	7	6	7	22	23	27
Bournemouth	20	5	8	7	31	38	23
Leeds	20	5	7	8	26	33	22
Nottm Forest	20	5	3	12	19	33	18
West Ham	20	3	5	12	21	41	14
Burnley	20	3	3	14	20	39	12
Wolves	20	1	3	16	14	40	6

CITY SLICKERS Tijjani Reijnders fires the home side in front

in keeping with a second-half display that at least showed this Chelsea squad will bring a bit of pride to the table when Rosenior gathers them together.

But while that second-half display was decent enough, this was a game that City should have wrapped up on more than one occasion.

And Pep Guardiola will know it is the type of slip-up that can be decisive in close title races, although with a six-point Gunners lead, the race might not even be close.

If Guardiola, though, wanted some consolation from the concession of a soft, late leveller, he could take it from the performance of his most trusted lieutenant.

In the passage of play that preceded a sumptuous strike from Tijjani Reijnders, there was a pass played in the middle of the park that probably travelled no more than a yard.

It was not even that clever. Just a simple return job, with the inside of the boot.

But it was almost symbolic. City had turned defence into attack via a reliable cog in the middle of the machine.

And that cog just happens to be a Ballon d'Or winner, one of the most influential midfielders the Premier League has seen.

This was Rodri's latest significant comeback, his first start in three months.

And in horse-racing parlance, he looked as though he needed the run.

Rodri has always been thickset but he was carrying some condition, for sure. And there was the odd occasion when he was caught in possession. Considering the amount of football he has missed over these past couple of seasons, that was only understandable.

But, generally, he was majestic in his own way. Breaking up play, splitting defences with his passing, breaking lines with his muscular strides.

If he can stay fit until the end of the season, City will still be a contender at home and in Europe.

But they – and this includes Erling Haaland – will need to be more clinical and will need to make better decisions in the opposition area.

Too often, Haaland, Rayan Cherki and Phil Foden took the wrong option when in threatening positions and that is unusual for a Pep team.

In the end, they were made to pay and McFarlane – once employed by City – could enjoy 15 minutes of fame.

And Arsenal and their manager, Mikel Arteta, could enjoy it even more.

LATE AGONY Guardiola consoles Foden at the final whistle

DAILY EXPRESS
SPORT
express.co.uk/sport

PARTY'S ON THE CARDS

LUKE CELEBRATES BY INDULGING HIS BOYHOOD HOBBY: SEE P54-55

MANCHESTER CITY 1 CHELSEA 1

BLUES' INTERIM MANAGER McFARLANE OVERSEES LATE RALLY TO DENT CITYZENS' TITLE CHALLENGE

GOING FER IT! Chelsea's Enzo Fernandez hit a late leveller to deny City

Injury agony for Guardiola

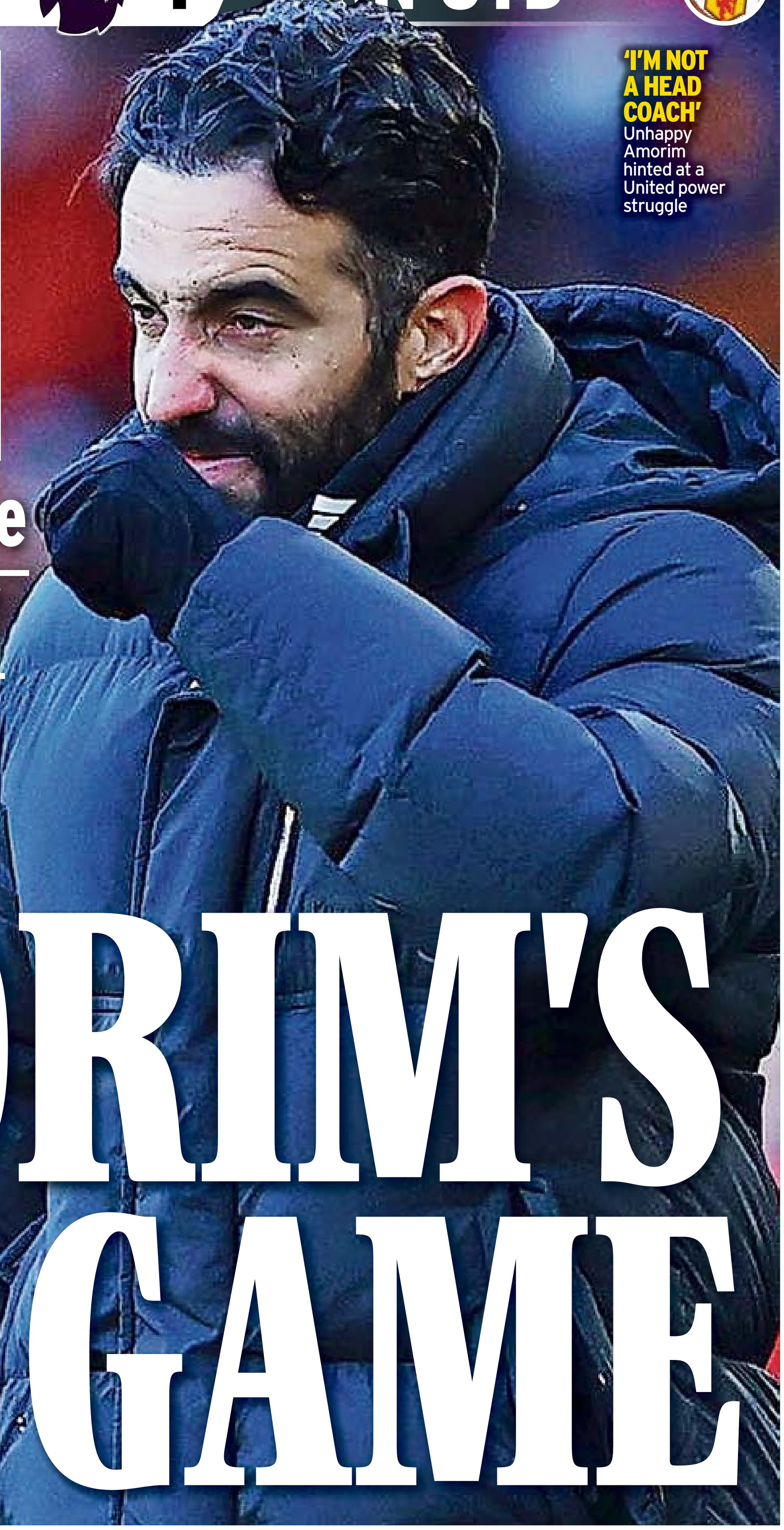
BY **ANDY DUNN**

PEP GUARDIOLA is facing an injury crisis after Manchester City's title challenge suffered a bitter blow at the Etihad.

Following Enzo Maresca's departure, Calum McFarlane took charge of Chelsea for one game – Liam Rosenior's appointment is imminent – and the interim boss masterminded a second-half comeback, with Enzo Fernandez scoring an

TURN TO PAGE 58, COLUMN 1

LEEDS UTD 1 1 MAN UTD



'I'M NOT A HEAD COACH' Unhappy Amorim hinted at a United power struggle

Ruben demands to be allowed to 'manage' and says he'll leave when contract is up

AMORIM'S END GAME

BY **JEREMY CROSS**

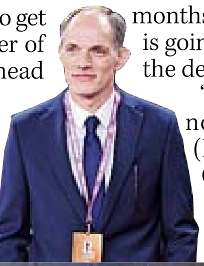
RUBEN AMORIM put his Manchester United future in doubt after insisting he would leave the club when his contract runs out.

Amorim also hinted at an internal power struggle at United, making it clear he wants to be left alone to get on with being manager of his team – instead of head coach.

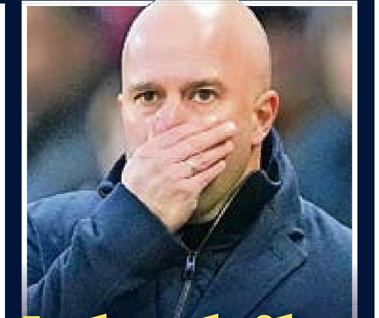
The Portuguese revealed he could leave when his deal runs out in 18 months time – if he is not sacked before then. Speaking after his side's 1-1 draw at Leeds, Amorim said: "I came here to be the manager of Manchester United – not the head coach.

"That's going to finish in 18 months, and then everyone is going to move on. That's the deal, that's my job.

"I know my name is not Thomas Tuchel (left), is not Antonio Conte and is not Jose Mourinho. But I am



TURN TO P57 COL 1



Late strike stuns Slot

FULHAM	2
LIVERPOOL	2

SEE PULLOUT PAGES 2-3

EVERTON	2
BRENTFORD	4

SEE PULLOUT PAGE 6

NEWCASTLE	2
C PALACE	0

SEE PULLOUT PAGE 7

TOTTENHAM	1
SUNDERLAND	1

SEE PULLOUT PAGES 4-5

DAILY EXPRESS
FeverPitch
ALL THE BEST ACTION, REACTION AND ANALYSIS
Harrison's last-gasp wonder goal leaves champions reeling

YOUR PULLOUT FREE INSIDE

Published by Reach plc, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP. Registered in England & Wales No. 82548. Printed by Reach Printing Services at St Albans Rd, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 7RG, Hollinwood Avenue, Chadderton, Oldham OL9 8EP, Interpress, 140 Duncrue Street, Belfast, BT3 9AQ., Miller Newsprint Ltd, Miller House, Triq L-Esportaturi, Zone 2, Mriehel, Birkirkara CBD 2040, Malta, Milkro Digital Cyprus, Nissou Industrial Area, Old Nicosia, Limassol Road, 2571 Nissou, Cyprus, Milkro Hellas Publisher Services Ltd, 2nd Kilometer Peanias Markopoullou Ave.,Position Nisiza, 19441 Koropi, Greece.

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
The recycled content of UK Newspapers in 2024 was 34.7%

Puzzles

SUDOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, row, and 3x3 square includes all of the digits from one to nine. **Solutions tomorrow**

EASY

	8		3		6		9	5
7					8	2		
		5		9	1	4		
	1				3		7	
9			2		5			4
	4		6				2	3
2		8	1			6		
			5	6				2
3	6		9		2		5	7

MEDIUM

	2			9			6	3
4					7	1		
	7	3		5			4	2
			9					
1		8				2		4
6				1	8			
				8	3		9	
	4	5	6				2	1
3	6			4			8	

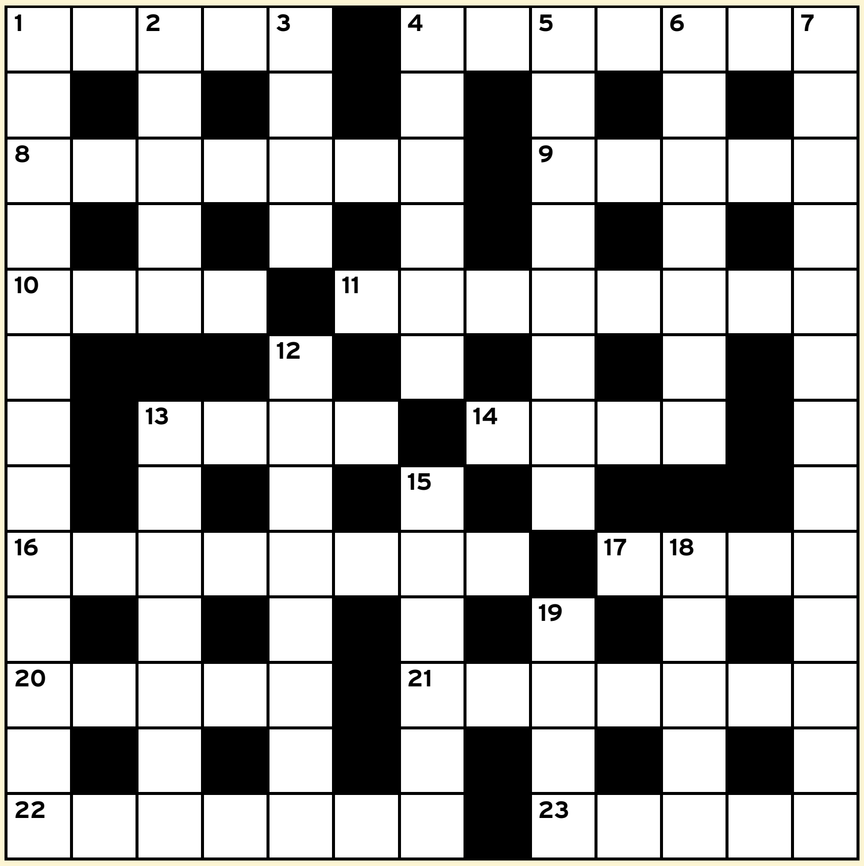
DIFFICULT

6			3			9		
		2				8		
	9		7		8			6
				3	7			2
		3				1		
5			4					
3			1		2		5	
	1	5				6		
		4			6			9

Extra clues:
0901 322 5609
**Calls cost 75p plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

Today's solution:
0907 181 2573
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS
- **1** Enunciate (5)
- **4** Aver (7)
- **8** Bravery (7)
- **9** Eat away (5)
- **10** Observe (4)
- **11** Ruffle (8)
- **13** Blessing (4)
- **14** Store (4)
- **16** Rash (8)
- **17** Couple (4)
- **20** Underneath (5)
- **21** Bunkum (7)
- **22** Select (7)
- **23** Forbidding (5)

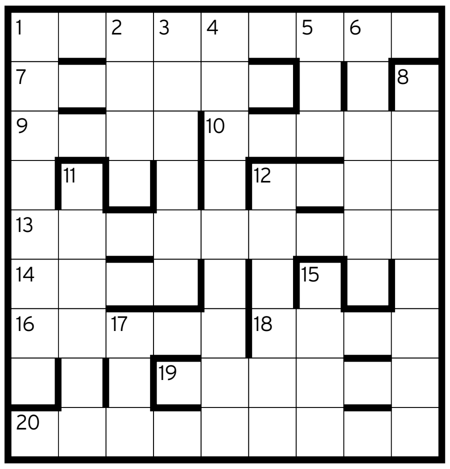
DOWN
- **1** Invincible (13)
- **2** Reliance (5)
- **3** Actual (4)
- **4** Summary (6)
- **5** Gain upon (8)
- **6** Unfolded (7)
- **7** Anticipate (5,1,5,2)
- **12** Disciple (8)
- **13** Pastoral (7)
- **15** Agreement (6)
- **18** Slacken (5)
- **19** Minus (4)

Solution tomorrow

Stuck on the puzzle? Call **0905 789 4188** to hear individual clues or the full solution

Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. Service provider Spoke Ltd* – ***Helpline 0333 202 3390*

SMALL CROSSWORD



ACROSS
- **1** Immoderate (9)
- **7** Drinking tubes (6)
- **9** Scorch (4)
- **10** Archery target ring (5)
- **12** Sheet of glass (4)
- **13** US state (9)
- **14** Eagerly expectant (4)
- **16** Trunk (5)
- **18** _ Amos, singer (4)
- **19** Spheres (6)
- **20** Elite salt (anag.) (9)

DOWN
- **1** Increase in extent or intensity (8)
- **2** Rugged cliff (4)
- **3** Type of insect (6)
- **4** Cylindrical sponge cake (5,4)
- **5** Tavern (3)
- **6** Capital of Austria (6)
- **8** Scholarly paper (8)
- **11** Capital of Colombia (6)
- **12** Firearm (6)
- **15** Asian desert (4)
- **17** Boring routine (3)

Solution tomorrow

For today's solution call:
0907 181 2582
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

CROSS DOUBT

Target times: Average: **16 mins**
Good: **12 mins** Excellent: **8 mins**

Stuck? Call for a clue
0901 322 5601
Halve your Target Time!

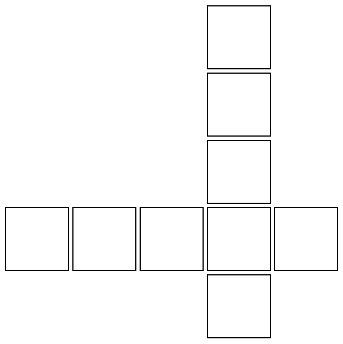
Today's solution
0901 322 5607
Both today's words in a moment!

**Calls cost 75p plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

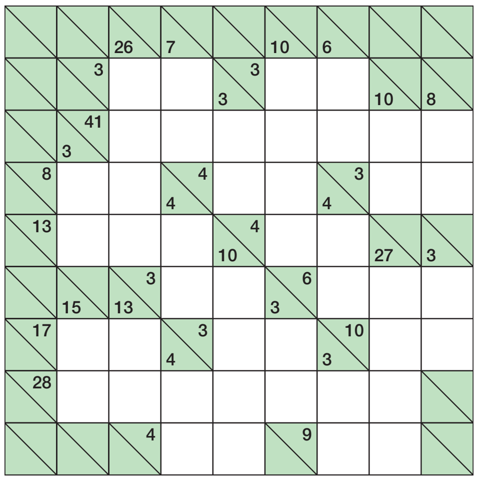
Can you make two common five-letter words from the nine letters given, using each letter only once? You can – but only if one letter features in both words in the squares on the right. There's at least one way to do it, and you have to have the right letter at the crossover – but which one is it?

See if you can find the answer within our target time. If you need help, ring our clue-line below to find out the crossover letter. **Solution tomorrow**

C E F G I M O R S



KAKURO



Fill each sequence of blank squares using the numbers 1-9. Each sequence – across and down – must total the number in the shaded box at the beginning or top of each line. A number may be repeated in each line but NOT in a sequence.

Solution tomorrow

Puzzles

WIN £250

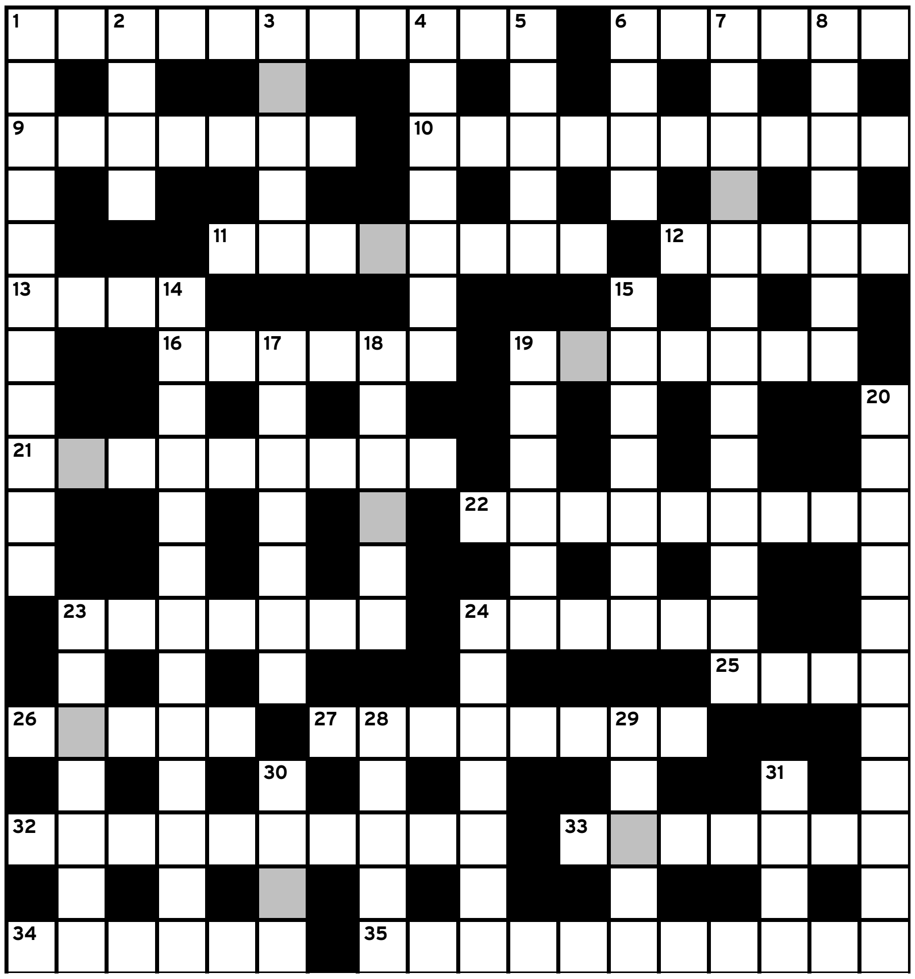
BIG MONDAY CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 American 'Queen of Disco' (1948-2012) whose sole UK No.1 was 1977's I Feel Love (5,6)
6 Father of Simba in the 1994 animated film The Lion King, voiced by James Earl Jones (6)
9 Italian name for Venice (7)
10 English highwayman arrested under the alias John Palmer in 1738 and hanged for horse theft (4,6)
11 In skiing, the natural route of descent down a particular part of a slope (4,4)
12 'Oh, what a dear ravishing thing is the beginning of an ___' (Aphra Behn The Emperor Of The Moon (1687) act 1, sc.1) (5)
13 Old unit of length based on the width of a splayed hand, equivalent to half a cubit (4)
16 Roman goddess of the dawn, sister to Sol (the Sun) and Luna (the Moon) (6)
19 Young son of the murdered Banquo in Shakespeare's Macbeth (7)
21 Smallest of New York City's three major airports, after John F. Kennedy and Newark (9)
22 See 4 Down
23 In classical architecture, a male figure used as a support for an entablature or other structure, also known as an atlas (7)
24 See 30 Down
25 Hulking anti-hero played by Mickey Rourke in the 2005 neo-noir crime film Sin City and its 2014 sequel (4)
26 Genus of plants and trees of the family Moraceae to which the figs belong (5)
27 Austronesian official language of Madagascar, whose chief dialect is Merina (8)
32 Alternative scoring system to stroke play in golf, in which points are awarded according to the number of strokes taken at each hole (10)
33 Roman poet whose Satires were written during the reigns of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian (7)
34 Property in physics whose law of conservation states that it can be neither created nor destroyed, only converted into different forms (6)
35 English author of novels including The Fortunes Of Perkin Warbeck (1830) and Lodore (1835) (4,7)

DOWN

1 Hungarian-British author of the 2025 Booker Prize-winning novel Flesh (5,6)
2 Prefix for units of measurement signifying one billionth; from Greek, 'dwarf' (4)
3 Brightest star in the constellation Virgo, forming the Spring Triangle with the nearby Arcturus and Regulus (5)
4 & 22 Across Lowest part of the brainstem, by which it is attached to the spinal cord (7,9)
5 Highly toxic protein occurring in the seeds of the castor oil plant, first isolated by German microbiologist Peter Hermann Stillmark in 1888 (5)
6 Caffeinated drink made by brewing the leaves of Ilex paraguariensis, traditionally served with a metal straw known as a bombilla (4)
7 Opening at the base of the skull (Latin, 'large hole') through which 4 Down passes (7,6)
8 Modified lateral leaf at the base of a plant's petiole (leaf stalk), typically occurring in pairs (7)
14 In mathematics, any of the positive integers, sometimes including 0 (7,6)
15 Last month of winter in the French Revolutionary calendar, starting in late February; from Latin, 'windy' (7)
17 Northernmost state of Brazil, bordering Venezuela and Guyana; capital, Boa Vista (7)
18 God of thunder in the Mortal Kombat media franchise, last played on the big screen (2021) by Tadanobu Asano (6)
19 Loss of possession of the ball during a play in American football, caused by a tackle, mishandling etc. (6)
20 Lowest, hottest and driest national park of North America, located in SE California and SW Nevada (5,6)
23 Knight of medieval legend who fell in love with Iseult, his uncle's bride, after they mistakenly drank a love potion (7)
24 Lover of Hero in Greek mythology, who swam across the Hellespont nightly to see her (7)
28 Unit of electrical resistance in the centimetre-gram-second system, introduced in 1903 (5)
29 English translation of the 'Yugo' in Yugoslavia and 'nam' in Vietnam (5)
30 & 24 Across Civilian identity of the X-Men character Gambit, played by Channing Tatum in 2024's Deadpool & Wolverine and the upcoming Avengers: Doomsday (4,6)
31 Indigofera suffruticosa, family Fabaceae, commonly used as a source of indigo dye (4)



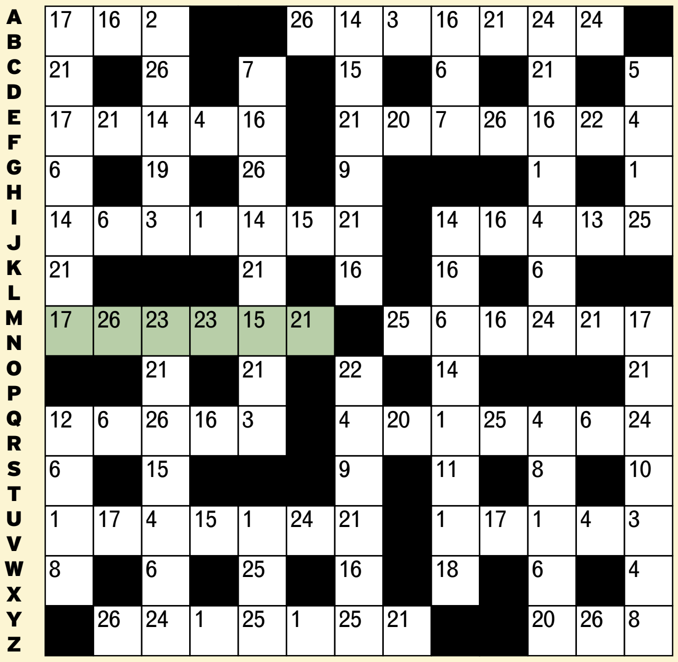
NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

STOP THE CLOCK

THE GREAT ALPHAPUZZLE™ TIME CHALLENGE



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION Across: Spout, Dismiss, CLING, Tableau, Ago, Epic, Merit, Decry, Major, Rotor, Twin, Use, Bizarre, Verse, Derange, Loser. **Down:** Socket, Forbid, Oxidise, Razor, Toga, Brethren, Tomb, True, Suburban, Evil, Inert, Onwards, Squirt, Endear.

WIN £100

25 MINUTES

Can you beat today's time?

TACKLE the Alphapuzzle™ Challenge – and be in with a chance of a £100 cash prize. FIRST, call the number below and note today's CLUE LETTERS and your unique PIN NUMBER to set your personal stop-watch running. Then, use the clue letters to work out the word in the green squares. When you crack the mystery word, call again and enter your pin number to STOP THE CLOCK. Winner selected at random from all correct entrants who beat the 25-minute Target Time. Each grid number represents a different letter. All 26 letters of the alphabet are used.

Solution next Monday

0907 181 2908

YOUR PIN No. _ _ _ _ _ _

**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. Lines close 23:59 every Sunday.*

£100 Winner (22 Dec):
D Robinson, Cornwall.

TO WIN £250 CASH!

read down the letters in the highlighted squares to reveal the mystery word.

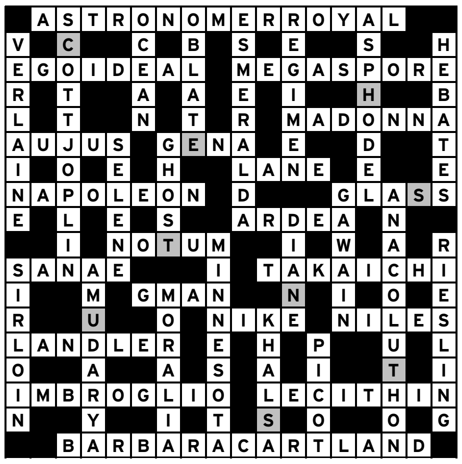
TO ENTER CALL: 0904 161 1601
(£1.50 per call plus network extras)

Leave your answer and details, or text BIGXWORD followed by a space, your answer, name and address to 88833 (texts cost £1.50 plus your standard network rate) or just complete the crossword correctly and send it to: Daily Express, Prize Crossword (No 1134), PO Box 8694, Derby DE1 9TW Competition closes Friday, January 9, 2024 at 11:59pm. Winner picked at random from all entry routes after close date. NEED HELP? Call 0904 161 1602 for five extra clues! *Calls are £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge.
*SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390.
For any postal enquiries, call this helpline.

BIG MONDAY CROSSWORD SOLUTION AND WINNER

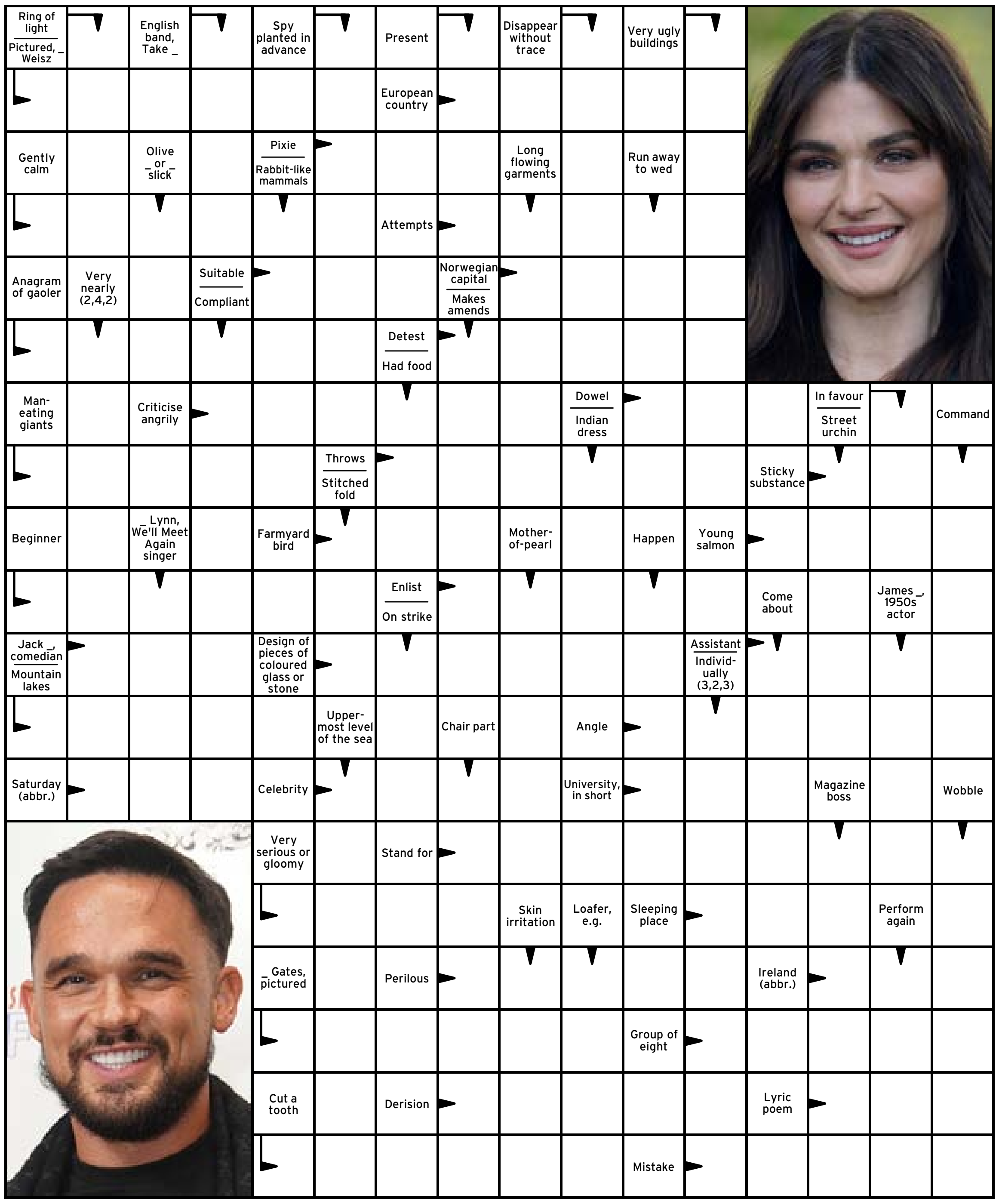
Monday December 22

£250 WINNER:
R McBride, Essex.



ARROW-WORD

Arrow-words are like crosswords, but the clues are printed inside squares on the grid. Write your answers in the blank squares in the direction indicated by the arrows.
Solution tomorrow


Ring of light
Pictured, _ Weisz
English band, Take _
Spy planted in advance
Present
Disappear without trace
Very ugly buildings
European country
Gently calm
Olive _ or _ slick
Pixie
Rabbit-like mammals
Long flowing garments
Run away to wed
Attempts
Anagram of gaoler
Very nearly (2,4,2)
Suitable
Compliant
Norwegian capital
Makes amends
Detest
Had food
Man-eating giants
Criticise angrily
Dowel
Indian dress
In favour
Street urchin
Command
Throws
Stitched fold
Sticky substance
Beginner
_ Lynn, We'll Meet Again singer
Farmyard bird
Mother-of-pearl
Happen
Young salmon
Enlist
On strike
Come about
James _, 1950s actor
Jack _, comedian
Mountain lakes
Design of pieces of coloured glass or stone
Assistant
Individually (3,2,3)
Uppermost level of the sea
Chair part
Angle
Saturday (abbr.)
Celebrity
University, in short
Magazine boss
Wobble
Very serious or gloomy
Stand for
Skin irritation
Loafer, e.g.
Sleeping place
Perform again
_ Gates, pictured
Perilous
Ireland (abbr.)
Group of eight
Cut a tooth
Derision
Lyric poem
Mistake

WORDSEARCH

E	Q	F	I	U	P	Y	A	D	H	T	R	I	B	B
X	T	Z	S	U	L	E	G	N	A	O	T	C	O	E
Y	Y	A	V	I	L	C	G	U	Q	I	S	M	E	G
N	H	W	L	R	N	O	B	G	E	N	O	A	T	N
W	D	T	I	O	U	U	F	U	A	P	F	M	R	O
B	L	B	I	R	C	H	T	D	N	V	E	T	O	P
A	G	P	Z	R	K	O	P	U	W	D	O	C	T	S
T	N	T	M	Q	B	M	H	M	G	R	T	D	R	A
T	I	F	A	B	W	A	X	C	R	V	E	S	E	I
E	D	Y	R	N	I	K	R	A	P	C	E	K	H	R
N	D	I	I	X	O	K	C	A	V	O	D	H	C	O
B	E	N	E	L	L	O	T	S	B	B	N	Z	A	T
E	W	Z	D	K	Y	R	H	W	O	E	U	N	S	C
R	U	N	A	M	T	E	V	L	E	V	D	E	R	I
G	Z	Y	M	X	R	F	L	E	N	M	I	S	P	V

TYPES OF CAKE

Find all the terms listed below in the grid.
Solution tomorrow

**ANGEL ● BARA BRITH ● BATTENBERG
BIRTHDAY ● BUNDT ● CARROT
CHOCOLATE ● DUNDEE ● GENOA
MADEIRA ● PARKIN ● RED VELVET
SACHERTORTE ● SIMNEL ● STOLLEN
TUNIS ● VICTORIA SPONGE ● WEDDING**

FRIDAY'S SOLUTIONS

THE ALPHABEATER

Black squares: 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 20, 23, 25, 29, 34, 37, 38.
Across: Lucky, Break, Bayed, Enquiry, Ravioli, Ski, Ash, Relayed, Betwixt, Quart, Vague, Prize.
Down: Jumbles, Exam, Playwright, Acid, Vortices, Pyre, Owl, Type, Ubiquity, Quiz, Irradiates, Fair, Hurtful.

THE ALPHAPUZZLE

Across: Inspect, Arid, Revue, Exclaim, Rejig, Stay, Repeat, Famous, Wick (clue), Aisle, Abolish, Gloss, Husk, Brother.
Down: Broker, Wrath, Nave, Spacious, Plebeian, Credit, Zither, Fanlight, Reaction, Mote, Dumpy, Squash.

TV CROSSWORD

Across: 5 Erin, **7** Hunted, **8** Lynda, **11** Ronni, **12** Horrocks, **13** Pike, **15** Swit, **16** Annette, **17** Luke, **18** Cowell, **21** Hugh, **22** Alun.
Down: 1 Juno, **2** Begins, **3** Dyer, **4** Darcey, **5** Elliott, **6** Idle, **9** Shrinking, **10** Aston, **14** Steve, **17** Leah, **19** Ola, **20** Lin.

TV show: Pluribus

ARROW-WORD

Across: Joanna, Reef, Flap, Dare, Hailer, Six, Soda, Hoe, Urn, Ironies, Barnet, Say, Nude, Him, Side, Lets, Ringo, Italy, Matinee, Mop, Ming, Elan, Saris, Bait, Vans, Rake, Page, Paces.
Down (left to right): Oban, Exam, Ava, Paradise, Rust, Toerag, Nepali, Indiscipline, Une, Rex, Reed, Ass, After, Jot, Erie, Item, Bra, Louisiana, Isaac, Dream, Glen, Ike, Pansy, Joy, Gates.
Shaded letters: Off The Telly

WORDS

SHARE

MUDDLESOME

Constance Talmadge
Pearl White
Gloria Swanson

CLOCK-WISE

Espy, Pyre, Rely, Lyre, Reap, Apes

QUIZ OF THE WEEK

1 All Blacks, **2** Four, **3** Redman, **4** 2028, **5** 1970s, **6** Millenary, **7** Manhattan, **8** Keely Hodgkinson, **9** World, **10** MMXXVI.

DITLOIDS

1 33 Vertebrae in a Human Spine,
2 1 Wheel on a Wheelbarrow,
3 16 Pawns in a Chess Set,
4 50 Years for a Golden Anniversary,
5 31 Days in August,
6 3 Little Pigs in the Fairy Tale

TRIVIA WORDSEARCH

1 Moby-Dick, **2** Damien Hirst, **3** Matthew, **4** Spider, **5** Captain Webb, **6** Lancelot, **7** George, **8** Jeffrey Archer, **9** Hare, **10** HG Wells

SUMTHING

7x4=28, 5x3=15, 2x7=14

SMALL CROSSWORD

Across: 1 Orchestra, **7** Beta, **8** Corfu, **10** Eft, **11** Theory, **13** Rotterdam, **14** Paella, **16** Coo, **18** Towel, **19** Semi, **20** Synthetic.
Down: 1 Obstructs, **2** Red-hot, **3** Halo, **4** Son, **5** Treadle, **6** Automatic, **8** Cure-all, **9** Let down, **12** Salami, **15** Else, **17** Wet.

CROSS DOUBT

Across: JOINS
Down: DAISY

SUDOKU EASY

1	5	2	6	4	3	8	7	9
3	8	9	1	5	7	6	4	2
4	6	7	8	9	2	5	3	1
9	7	1	4	3	6	2	5	8
5	4	8	9	2	1	3	6	7
6	2	3	7	8	5	9	1	4
7	3	4	2	6	9	1	8	5
2	1	6	5	7	8	4	9	3
8	9	5	3	1	4	7	2	6

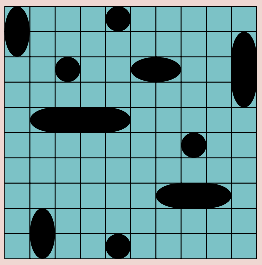
SUDOKU MEDIUM

3	7	4	2	1	5	9	8	6
2	9	8	4	3	6	7	5	1
6	1	5	8	9	7	2	4	3
9	3	1	6	8	2	4	7	5
4	2	7	1	5	9	3	6	8
8	5	6	3	7	4	1	2	9
1	6	2	5	4	3	8	9	7
5	8	9	7	2	1	6	3	4
7	4	3	9	6	8	5	1	2

SUDOKU DIFFICULT

4	7	5	1	9	8	6	2	3
8	2	9	3	5	6	7	1	4
6	3	1	4	7	2	5	8	9
1	6	2	8	3	4	9	7	5
9	4	8	7	6	5	2	3	1
7	5	3	2	1	9	8	4	6
2	1	6	9	4	7	3	5	8
3	9	7	5	8	1	4	6	2
5	8	4	6	2	3	1	9	7

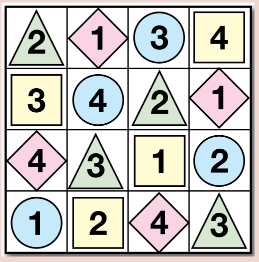
BATTLESHIPS



KAKURO

1	4	3	2			8	1
6	8	5	9		1	6	2
	1	2			3	9	
3	6	1	4	2		1	3
1	2		2	1	5	3	4
	5	1			8	5	
2	7	3		1	7	2	3
1	3			2	9	7	1

KEIJO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3

QUICK CROSSWORD

Across: 1 Justifiably, **9** Umbrage, **10** Irate, **11** Ranks, **12** Canvass, **13** Effete, **15** Affect, **18** Secrete, **20** Chill, **22** Maids, **23** Evident, **24** Unceasingly.
Down: 2 Urban, **3** Transit, **4** French, **5** Avian, **6** Leakage, **7** Quarrelsome, **8** Versatility, **14** Fiction, **16** Faction, **17** Recess, **19** Ensue, **21** Ideal.

TARGET

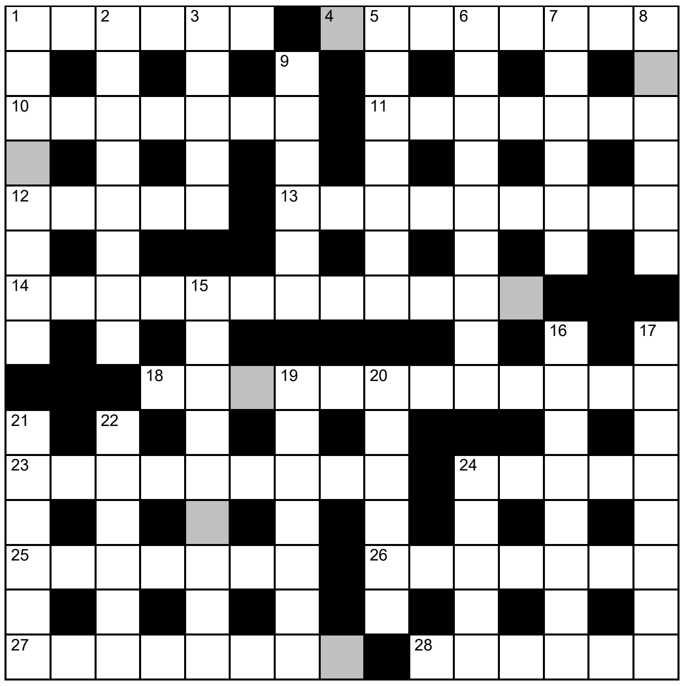
EVIDENTLY
delve, devil, dive, endive, envied, envy, even, evenly, event, evident, EVIDENTLY, evil, levied, levity, levy, live, lived, liven, livened, neve, veil, veiled, vein, veined, veinlet, veiny, veld, veldt, vend, venite, vent, vented, ventil, vide, vied, vile, vine, viny, vinyl

Puzzles

CRUSADER PRIZE CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Overwhelming amount of French glue used (6)
4 Hindered basket with hollow conclusion (8)
10 New bits in small location online (7)
11 Flat pie cooked in dirty place (7)
12 Sample sweet extremities at meeting (5)
13 Explosion gets unbridled anger to come back (9)
14 Scheming fellow put one value tip out (12)
18 Service staged and made on an industrial scale (4-8)
23 Famous expert with explosive book (9)
24 Bile about liberal defamation (5)
25 Negative response to president's bid (2-5)
26 Trained cadet or soldier (7)
27 Fruit from strange bog within city (8)
28 Happy front was removed and contracted (6)

DOWN
1 Depressed, on occasion, outside hours of work (8)
2 Room in front of garage for campaigning (8)
3 Right idea about grain (5)
5 Insult a fellow with audacity (7)
6 Kept jam at back of cupboard (9)
7 Salesman with ale order to cancel (6)
8 Foreign prince volunteers, sheltered in declining years (6)
9 Bigger bills included a pet (6)
15 Quiet freedom is commonplace (9)
16 Visibly injured strike-breaker promises to follow (8)
17 Praised a university student in old-fashioned surroundings (8)
19 Railway supporter is a secret agent (7)
20 Stop working and go to bed (6)
21 Ventured too much about tree (6)
22 Perform joke, having time for identification (3,3)
24 Promise to take front off sill (5)



WIN £100 CASH

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN
Read down the letters in the highlighted squares to reveal the mystery word.

TO ENTER: Call **0904 161 3700** (calls cost £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge) and leave your answer and details, or text **DXCRUS** followed by a space, your answer, name and address details to **88833** (texts cost £1.50 plus your standard network rate). Lines close at midnight Saturday. Or send your grid containing the answer in the shaded squares by posting it to: Crusader Crossword, January 5, PO Box 8694, Derby DE1 9TW. Entries must be postmarked by January 6 at the latest. For any postal enquiries, call helpline number. SP: Spoke - 0333 202 3390.
An extra day is given for postal entries during bank holidays.

● *One weekly winner will be the first random correct entry drawn from all entry routes after the closing date of midnight Saturday. Competition runs Sunday to Saturday. The Editor's decision is final.*

NEED HELP? Call **0904 161 1609** for 5 extra clues! Calls cost £1.50 plus your telephone company's network access charge.

NAME

ADDRESS

POSTCODE

LAST THURSDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Responder, 6 Oath, 10 Douse, 11 Angle iron, 12 Article, 13 Lioness, 14 Demonstrative, 17 Printed matter, 21 Roe deer, 22 Vaccine, 24 Prescient, 25 Usage, 26 Lift, 27 Sweetmeat. **DOWN:** 1 Red panda, 2 Squat, 3 Overconfidence, 4 Dearest, 5 Regalia, 7 Agreement, 8 Honest, 9 Deposit account, 15 Maple leaf, 16 Briefest, 18 Targets, 19 Devotee, 20 Propel, 23 Image. **Prizeword:** Penelope

TARGET

C	O	E
W	D	B
O	E	H

● *The Target uses words in the main body of Chambers 21st Century Dictionary (1999 edition)*

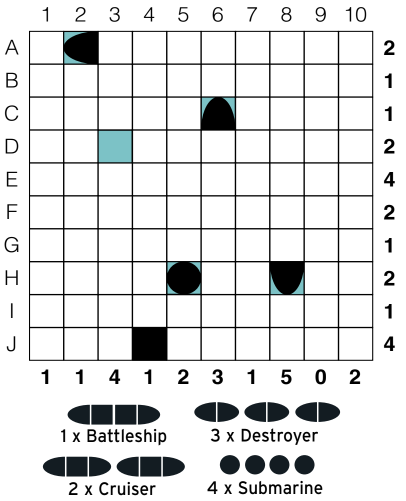
HOW many words of four letters or more can you make from the letters shown here?
In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each must contain the centre letter and there must be at least one nine-letter word. No plurals. Verb forms ending in S permitted.

TODAY'S TARGET
Good 11; **very good** 17; **excellent** 22 **(or more). Solution tomorrow**

Call **0907 181 2585**
for today's Target solution
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

BATTLESHIPS

FIND where the fleet of ships shown is hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some squares have been filled in to start you off.
Solution tomorrow



THE ALPHABEATER

TARGET TIME: 34 minutes

CAN you crack the Alphabeater? Each grid number represents a letter - or black square. As in Alphapuzzle, every letter of the alphabet is used. But you have to complete the grid too! Use the given letters and black squares below the grid to start. The grid is 'rotationally symmetrical' - in other words, it looks the same if you turn the page upside down.
Solution tomorrow

Extra letter clues
0907 181 2560
(Deduct three minutes for each extra clue letter heard)
Full solution
0907 181 2558
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

A B C D E F ~~G~~ H I J K L ~~M~~ N O P Q R S T U V ~~W~~ X Y Z

12	2	4	26	10	29	1	13	10	6	40	32	27
17	33	13	33	27	28	15	4	8	10	4	8	32
2	8	34	39	33	30	20	5	3	35	7	3	30
5	6	40	1	5	35	11	17	18	4	39	36	38
3	34	21	39	26	28	4	18	39	29	8	17	23
35	5	39	31	22	6	3	24	7	6	34	4	37
27	22	33	2	26	10	31	19	3	16	39	23	40
36	39	11	23	22	17	20	30	24	13	3	31	29
24	7	20	35	25	3	34	14	11	4	33	34	38
11	25	3	16	39	7	34	23	30	34	35	7	22
6	3	31	17	39	30	39	17	3	25	20	19	28
26	14	8	4	26	4	38	37	40	39	27	4	5
24	38	35	13	15	22	28	30	1	33	20	9	14

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
						■													
21	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**	**27**	**28**	**29**	**30**	**31**	**32**	**33**	**34**	**35**	**36**	**37**	**38**	**39**	**40**
		■									G				W	M			

● Alternatively, for six Extra Letter clues to your mobile, text **DXBEAT to 64343.** Texts cost £1 plus standard network rate.

WORD BUILDER

Solution tomorrow

Answer the clues so that each word contains the same letters as the previous word, plus or minus one.

1	☐☐☐	1	Append
2	☐☐☐☐	2	Out of power
3	☐☐☐☐☐	3	Walked through
4	☐☐☐☐☐☐	4	Dally
5	☐☐☐☐☐	5	Confuse
6	☐☐☐☐	6	Heavy metal
7	☐☐☐	7	Beer

THE ALPHAPUZZLE®

Alphapuzzle® tests logic and word power. Each grid number stands for a letter. Every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter or letters – below the main grid – to start. **Solution tomorrow**
DIFFICULTY: 10/10; **TARGET:** 30 mins; **CLUE:** Ransack a firearm

A B ~~C~~ D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

■	25	4	1	15	8	■	22	13	7	7	16	■
8	■	■	2	■	16	■	13	■	25	■	■	23
2	■	25	26	22	13	12	6	2	11	13	■	3
17	25	12	13	■	■	25	■	■	25	9	7	13
7	■	8	■	21	15	14	13	26	■	12	■	13
13	5	15	■	2	■	13	■	25	■	2	18	18
■	■	4	15	21	4	■	10	2	7	6	■	■
6	13	25	■	2	■	26	■	24	■	25	14	13
8	■	6	■	12	8	25	19	16	■	4	■	7
13	9	2	6	■	■	21	■	■	24	7	25	4
18	■	12	1	25	21	14	25	5	18	13	■	15
26	■	■	2	■	13	■	21	■	15	■	■	20
■	8	13	18	13	20	■	14	15	20	13	8	■

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
											C	
14	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	**24**	**25**	**26**

EXTRA LETTER CLUES: 0907 181 2568*
Hear up to six Extra Letters, deduct two minutes for each clue letter heard.
FULL SOLUTION: **0907 181 2565***
ACROSS ONLY: **0907 181 2561*** / DOWN ONLY: **0907 181 2562***
**Calls cost 80p per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge.*

*Alternatively, for six extra letter clues direct to your mobile, text **DXALPHA** to **64343.** Texts cost £1 plus standard network rate.*

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THE DAILY EXPRESS 30-SECOND CHALLENGE

TODAY'S ANSWERS: BEGINNER = 3; INTERMEDIATE = 332; ADVANCED = 340.

PLAY MORE CROSSWORDS AND GAMES AT EXPRESS.CO.UK/PUZZLES

*SP: Spoke - **Helpline 0333 202 3390***

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Editor's letter

Patchwork and quilting go together like needle and thread, and Love Patchwork & Quilting magazine is an essential read for anyone who is interested in or enjoys creative and rewarding crafts.

With projects ranging from simple weekend makes to elaborate quilts, this is the perfect magazine to try your hand at the wonderful world of quilting.

You can also find projects to stretch your skills and sew a stunning quilt when you're ready to take the next step. For those who are more advanced quilters, and looking for a show-stopping design, Today's Quilter, our sister title, will take your skills to the next level and challenge you to make heirlooms you will cherish for life. Sewing is a wonderful hobby that can quieten your mind and take you away from the stress of your day. With just you, some fabric and the sewing machine whirring away, find your peace while creating quilted and patchwork projects. Love what's on these pages?

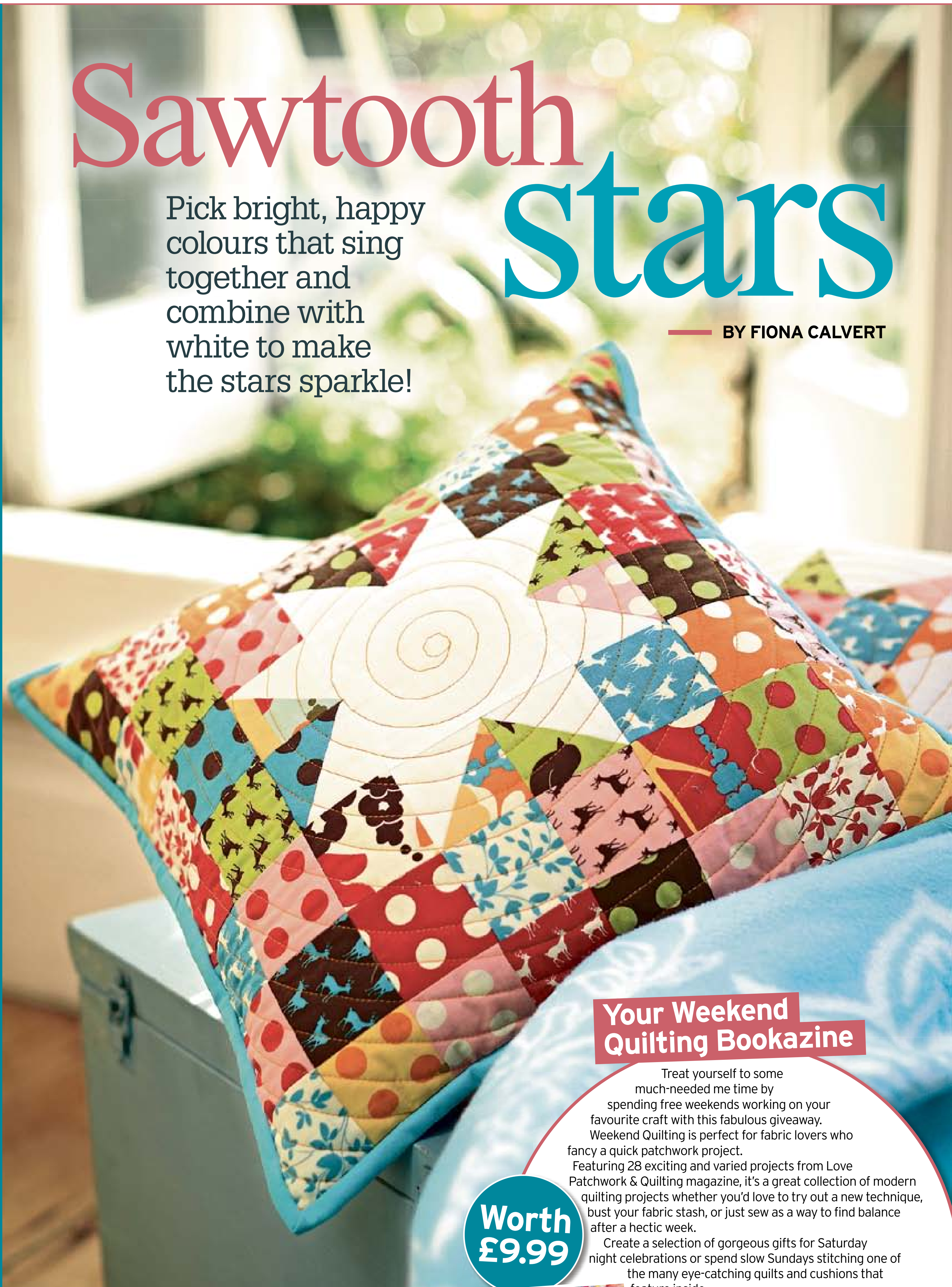
Scan the QR code on the right for your free digital download of the Weekend Quilting booklet. The booklet aims to make your precious free time as fun, creative and fulfilling as possible. Whether you'd love to try out a new technique, bust your fabric stash or just sew to find balance after a hectic week, we've got you covered. We hope you enjoy the projects on these pages and create something special for you and your family.

Fiona Lawrence
Editor of Love Patchwork & Quilting

Sawtooth stars

Pick bright, happy colours that sing together and combine with white to make the stars sparkle!

BY FIONA CALVERT



Your Weekend Quilting Bookazine

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Weekend Quilting is perfect for fabric lovers who fancy a quick patchwork project.

Featuring 28 exciting and varied projects from Love Patchwork & Quilting magazine, it's a great collection of modern quilting projects whether you'd love to try out a new technique, bust your fabric stash, or just sew as a way to find balance after a hectic week.

Create a selection of gorgeous gifts for Saturday night celebrations or spend slow Sundays stitching one of the many eye-catching quilts and cushions that feature inside.

The ultimate goal of Weekend Quilting is to give you everything you need to make your precious free time as fun, creative and fulfilling as possible while you do what you love – quilting.

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WEEKEND
Quilting
28 FEEL-GOOD PROJECTS

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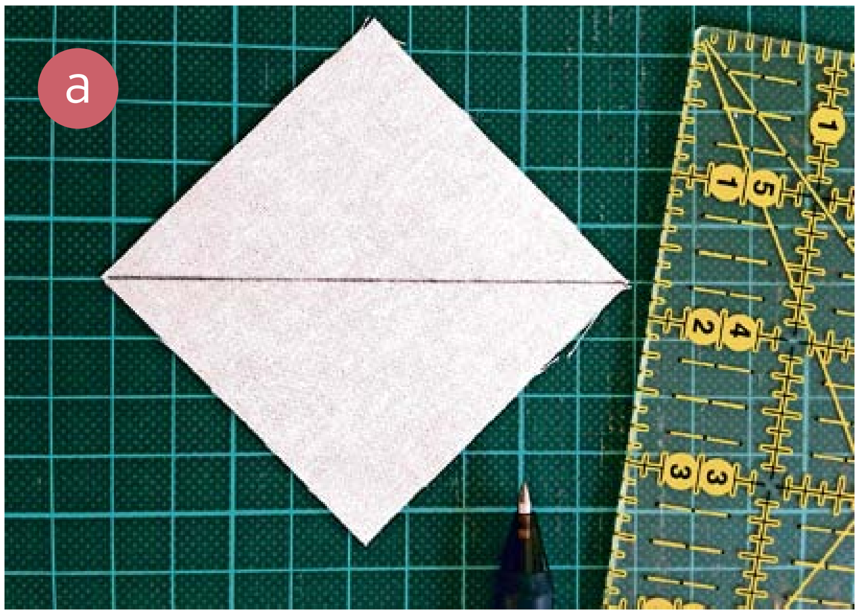
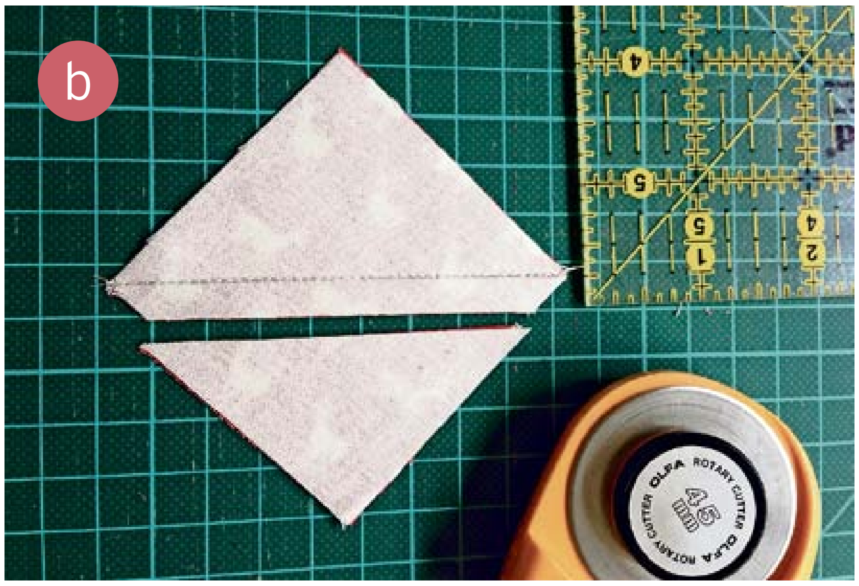
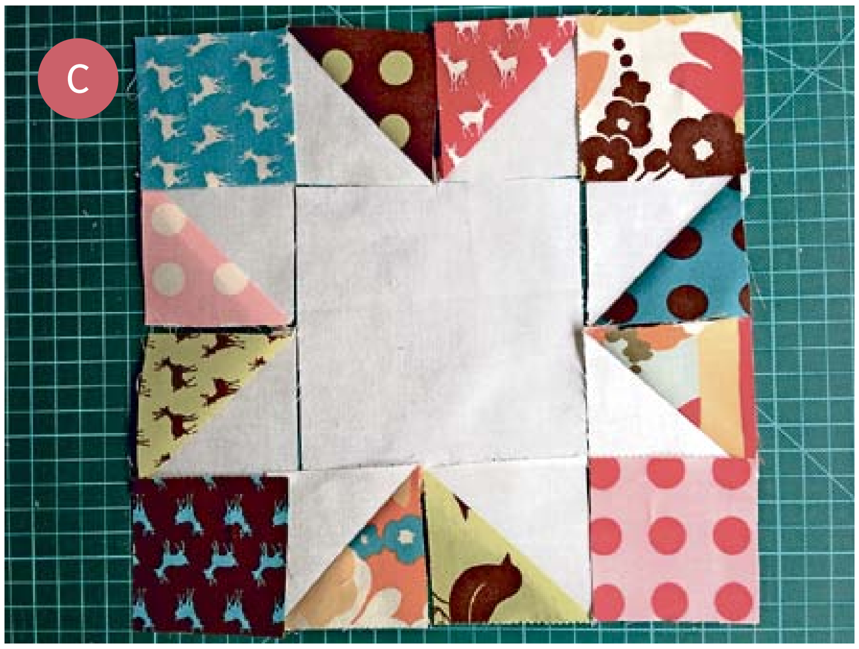
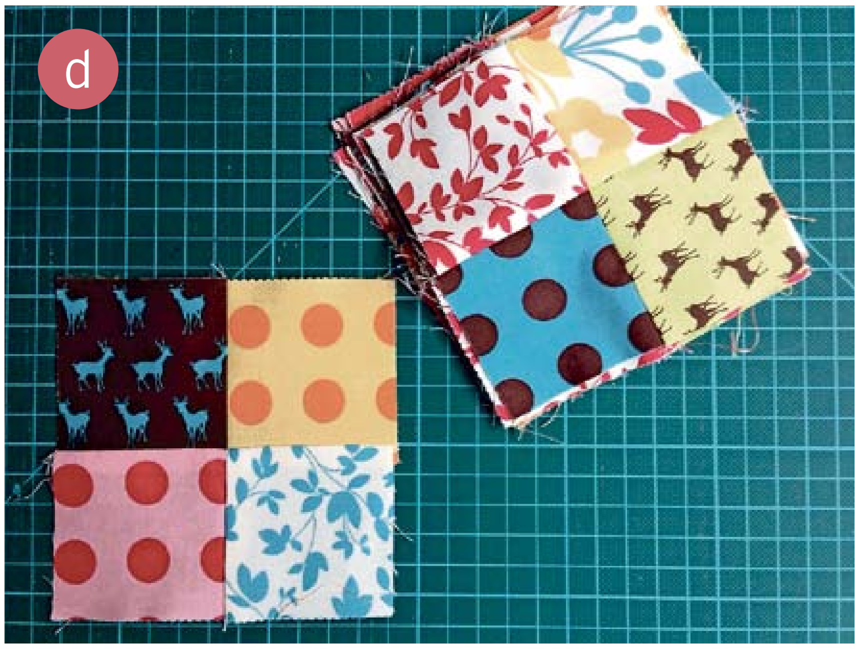








SAWTOOTH STARS

YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE BOTH CUSHIONS:

- 72 coloured fabric squares, each 2½in square
- White fabric: twenty 2½in squares and one 4½in square
- White fabric strips: two 8½in x 4½in and two 16½in x 4½in
- Two pieces of batting each 18in square
- Two pieces of lining fabric each 18in square
- Two pieces of backing fabric each 18in x 21in
- Four strips of fabric 2½in x width of fabric for binding
- Two zips 20in long
- Erasable fabric marking pen
- Cushion pad 16in square

NOTES

- Seam allowances ¼in unless otherwise noted.
- WOF = width of fabric.
- Press all fabrics well before cutting. Fabric used: I cut eighteen charm
- squares into 72 2½in squares.

FINISHED SIZE

- 16in square

CUTTING OUT

1 For each piece of 18in x 21in backing fabric, cut in two to yield one piece 18in x 11in and one piece 18in x 10in.

MAKING THE WHITE STAR

2 Take sixty of the coloured 2½in squares, eight of the white 2½in squares and the white 4½in square and set the rest of the materials aside for later. On each white 2½in square mark a line diagonally across the square (Fig a).

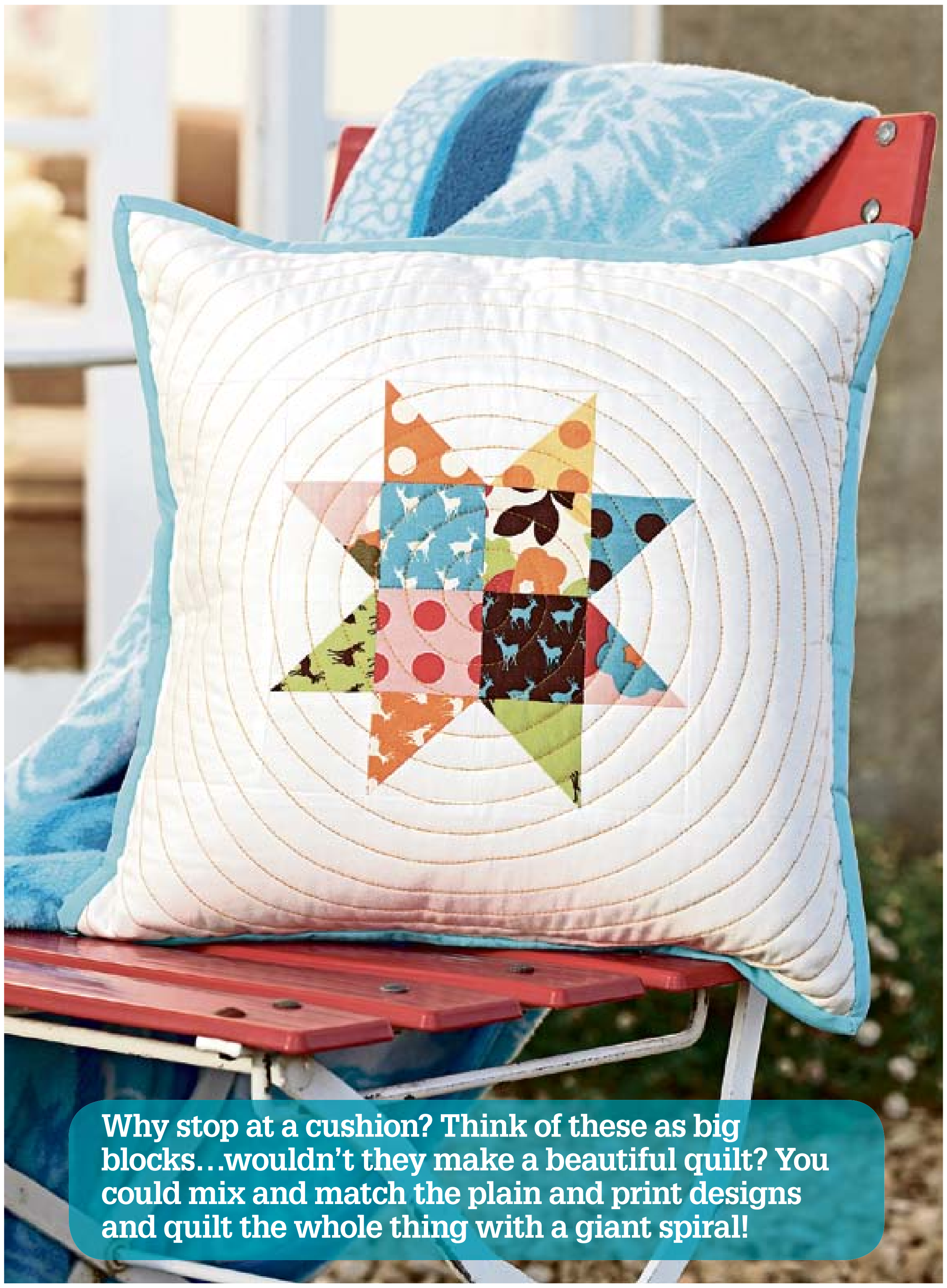
3 To make eight half-square triangles, pair each of the marked white squares with a coloured square and stitch together along the marked line. Trim ¼in away from the stitched line (Fig b). Open and press the seam towards the coloured fabric.

4 Sew the half-square triangles into pairs. Arrange these pairs with four coloured squares and the 4½in white square as shown (Fig c). Sew a half-square triangle pair to either side of the 4½in square. Sew a coloured square to either side of the two remaining half-square triangle pairs to create three rows. Sew the three rows together to form the centre star. Press all seams open.

5 Use 48 coloured squares to make twelve four-patch blocks (Fig d), with fabrics arranged randomly throughout. Arrange the four-patch blocks around your star unit as shown (Fig e). Sew into rows and then join the rows together, pressing all seams open.

FIONA CALVERT

Fiona loves to sew and quilt – you can find out more about her sewing adventures at *www.poppymakes.blogspot.co.uk*



Why stop at a cushion? Think of these as big blocks…wouldn't they make a beautiful quilt? You could mix and match the plain and print designs and quilt the whole thing with a giant spiral!

SAWTOOTH STARS

MAKING THE COLOURED STAR

6 Using eight white squares and eight coloured squares, mark the diagonal of the white squares and make half square triangles as before (see step 3).

7 Sew the four coloured 2½in squares into a four-patch block and arrange with the half-square triangles and four white 2½in squares to form a star as shown. Sew the half-square triangles into pairs and stitch into rows with the white squares as shown (Fig f). Sew the rows together, pressing all seams open.

8 Add a border by sewing one 8½in x 4½in white strip to each side of the star block and press open. Sew one 16½in x 4½in strip to the top and bottom as shown (Fig g).

QUILTING

9 For each cushion, lay the lining fabric face down and place the batting on top. Lay the star patchwork on top face up and baste together using your preferred method. Mark the centre of your spiral quilt pattern as shown using an erasable fabric marker (Fig h).

10 Using a walking foot if you have one, quilt from the centre outwards. We used the edge of our walking foot as a guide when sewing the spiral (Fig i).

MAKING UP THE COVER

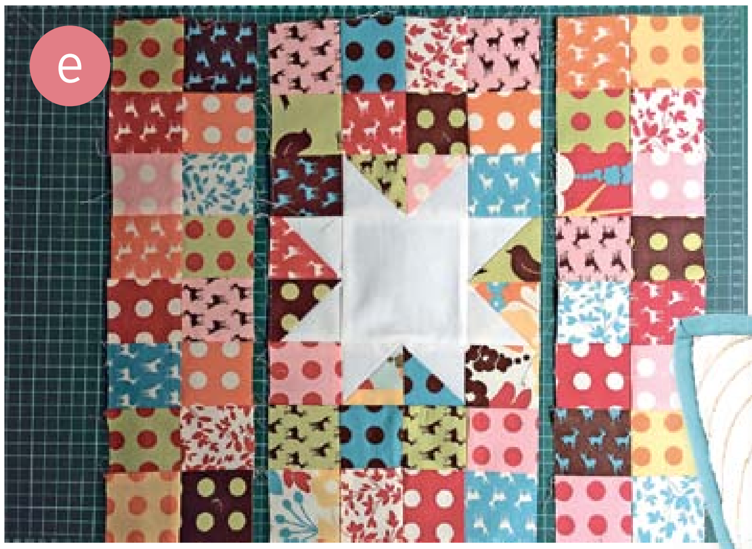
11 Both cushions are made up in the same way. For each cushion backing, serge or zigzag around the 18in edges of the backing fabric to prevent fraying before inserting your zips.

12 For each 18in x 11in piece, fold one serged 18in edge over by 1in and press. This will form the zip cover flap. Lay the backing fabric face down, align the zip along the serged edge and pin carefully. Stitch the zip to the backing fabric (Fig j).

13 Turn face up and fold the flap out of the way. Lay the 18in x 10in backing piece on top, face down. Align the 18in serged edge with the edge of the zip and pin in place (Fig k). Stitch along the edge of the zip. Press the fabric away from the zip, being careful not to melt the zipper teeth. Topstitch as shown (Fig l).

14 Open the zip a little way. Lay the backing fabric face down and place the cushion front on top, face up. Making sure your cushion is centred, carefully pin all round the edge of the cushion (Fig m). Stitch around all four sides of the cushion using a scant ¼in seam. Trim any excess fabric around the cushion.

15 Join the binding strips together and bind each cushion as you would bind a quilt. We machine stitched it to the front of each cushion (with right sides facing), then pressed it to the back of the cushion and hand stitched it in place for a neat finish (Fig n).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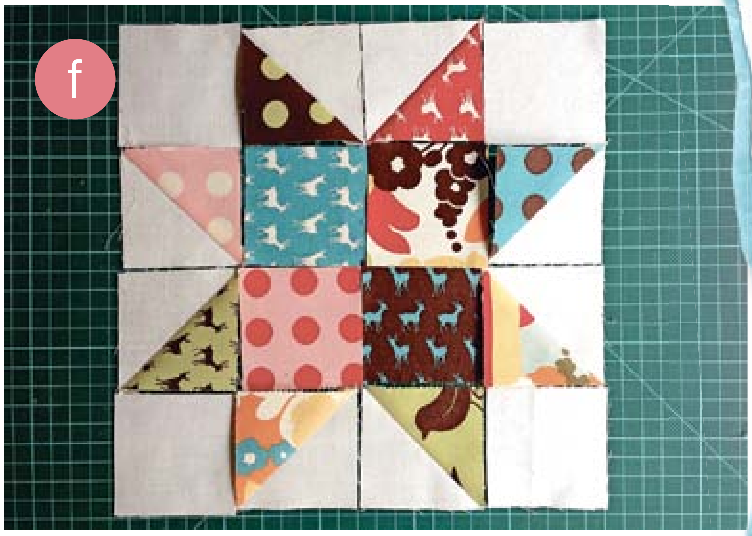
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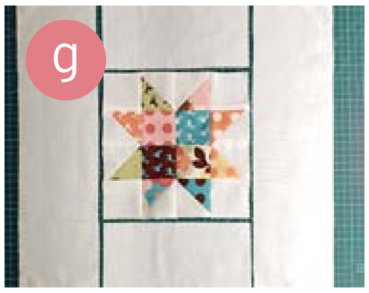
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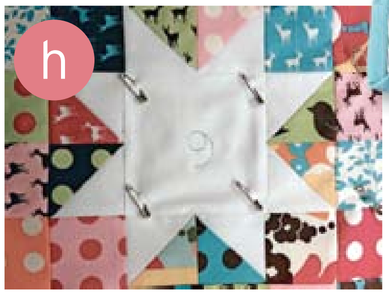
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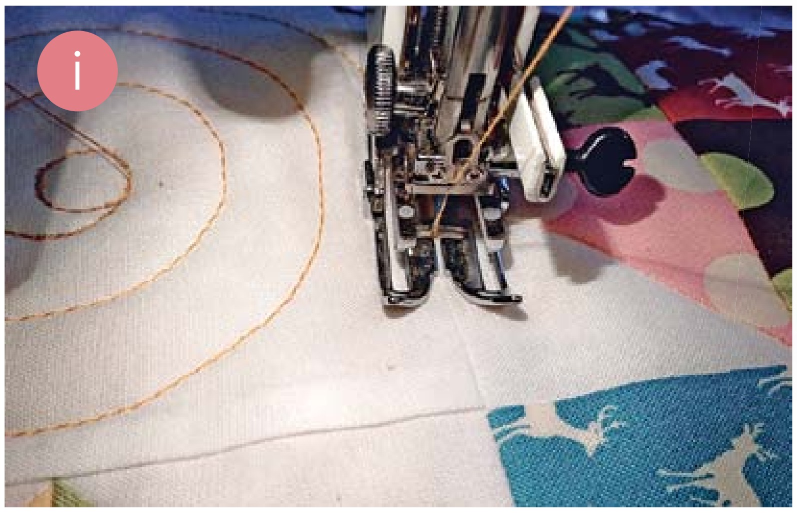
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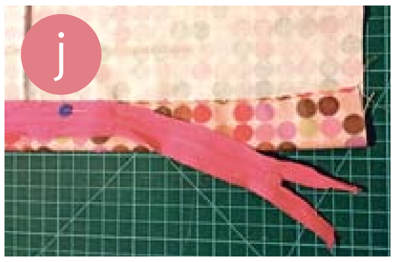
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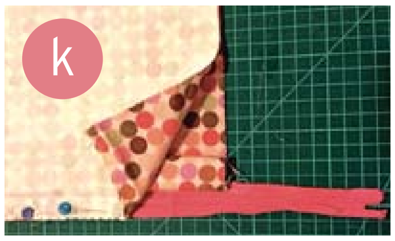
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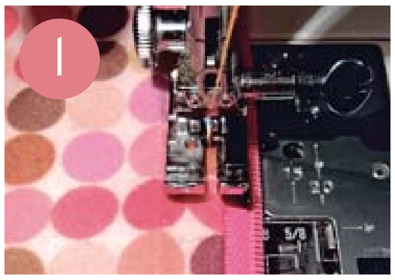
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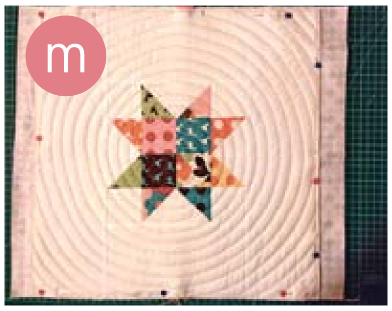
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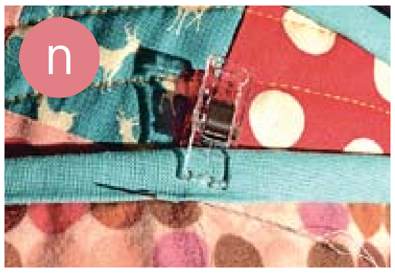
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TOP TIP

When adding the zip you can use your ¼in foot if you have one – place the edge of the foot against the zip teeth (as shown above). This gives a nice even look to your zip stitching and is especially helpful as a guide when top stitching.

Pick out a colour in your stitching

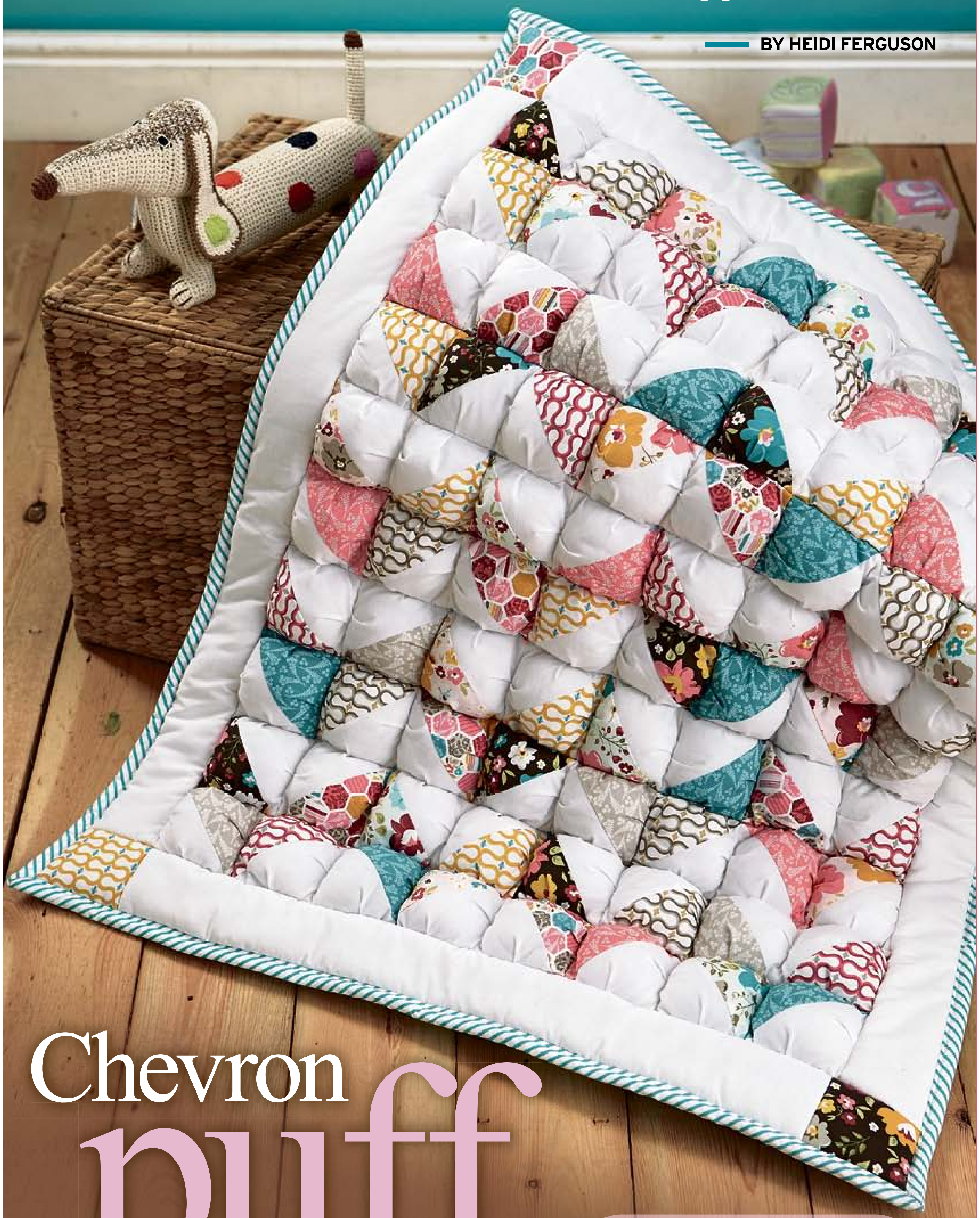
Keep it simple with a fresh white backing

Or go all-out with colour and print!

Chevron puff quilt

This fluffy, puffy quilt is light-as-air – make in marshmallow colours for the perfect snuggle quilt

BY HEIDI FERGUSON



CHEVRON PUFF QUILT

MATERIALS

- White quilting cotton: 1yd
- Printed quilting cotton, for the quilt top: 1yd (or at least four fat quarters of different fabrics – more if you want more variety)
- Muslin (US) or calico (UK): 1½yd
- Binding fabric: ½yd
- 1 pack poly-fil toy stuffing (approx 250g)
- High loft batting: ¾yd
- Low loft batting: 1yd
- Backing fabric: 1¼yds
- Embroidery floss to match the backing fabric

FINISHED SIZE

- 36in x 31in approx.

NOTES

- RST = right sides together.
- WOF = width of fabric.
- HST = half-square triangle.
- Seam allowances are all ⅜in, unless otherwise stated.
- Wash and press all fabrics well before cutting.

CUTTING OUT

1 From white quilting cotton cut:
- Forty 5in squares.
- Two 4in x 30in strips.
- Two 4in x 23½in strips.
- Four 4in squares.

2 From printed quilting cotton cut:
- Forty 5in squares.
- Four 4in squares.

3 From muslin cut:
- Eighty-four 4in squares.
- Two 4in x 30in strips.
- Two 4in x 23½in strips.

4 From binding fabric cut:
- Four 4in x WOF strips.

5 From high loft batting cut:
- Four 4in squares.
- Two 4in x 30in strips.
- Two 4in x 23½in strips.

PREPARE HSTS

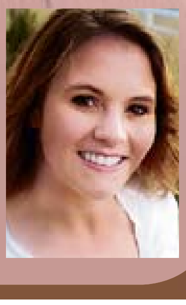
6 Place one 5in square of white fabric to a 5in printed square RST. Using a ruler, mark a line down the diagonal. Then sew a ¼in seam allowance on either side of the line. Cut on the line and open to reveal your two half triangle squares (**fig a**). Iron towards the coloured fabric and trim the overhanging corners (**fig b**). Repeat with all 40 of the white and printed 5in squares until you have 80 half-square triangles (HST).

7 Place one HST on one 4in square muslin, wrong sides together. Line up the corners (**fig c**). You will see that since the top piece is larger you will have to make a crease in the top fabric (**fig d**). Sew with a ⅜in seam allowance down the edge, over the crease. Pivot at the corner and repeat with the next two sides. Leave the fourth edge open. Take a handful of the poly-fil and stuff it in the pocket. Then make your crease and sew the final side shut (**fig e**). Repeat until you have all 80 puffs sewn.

ASSEMBLE THE QUILT TOP

8 Now the fun part! Arrange the puffs until you get the pattern the way you like it. Rotate the HST puffs to achieve the chevron pattern (**fig f**). Line up the puffs so you have eight puffs in a row and ten puffs in a column.

HEIDI FERGUSON



Heidi is known as 'the puff quilt girl' and her gorgeous puffy quilts have captured the hearts and imaginations of modern quilters the world over. She's not just a savvy stitcher, oh no! She also blogs about painting, designing, decorating and baking at her online home: *www.honeybearlane.com*

»

CHEVRON PUFF QUILT

9 Sew the puffs together one at a time, pushing the puffs RST and using a ⅝in seam allowance to ensure the puffs' seams don't show. Sew each puff together until you have ten rows of eight.

10 Push two rows of puffs together and match up the seams of each row, placing a pin in each intersection. Then sew the rows together with a ⅝in seam allowance. It's easiest to sew the rows together in sets of two, then in sets of four.

11 Prepare a quilt sandwich with the remaining 4in squares of patterned fabric, high loft batting and white fabric (**fig g**) to make the cornerstones. Repeat with the two 4in x 30in strips and two 4in x 23½in strips of muslin, batting and white fabric to make the borders. Baste the edges of these sandwiches. Sew in the same direction down each set of long edges to avoid stretching the fabric diagonally.

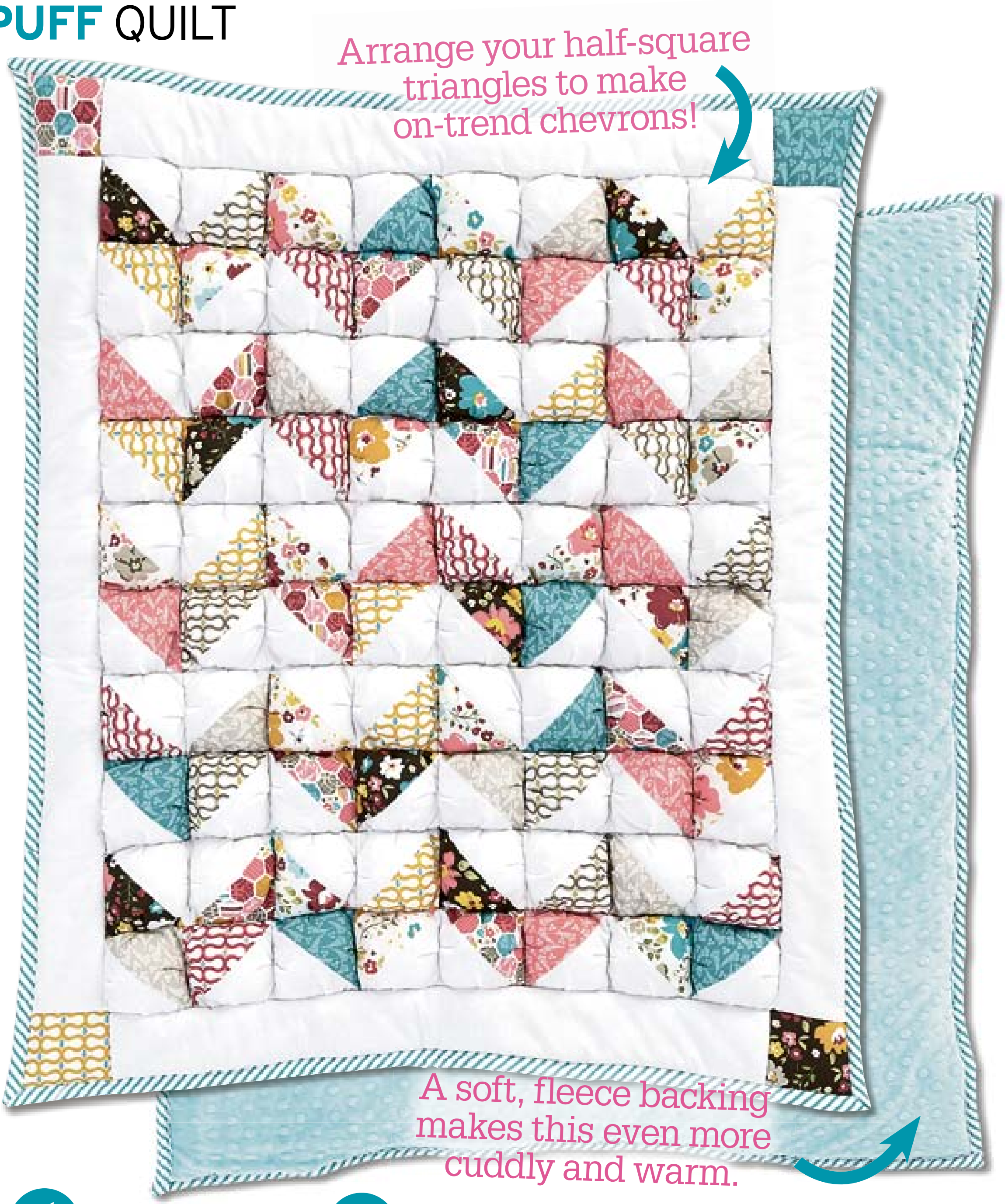
12 With RST sew the four squares to the ends of the long borders (**fig h**).

13 Turn the quilt over and pin one short border to the short side of the quilt, RST (**Fig I**). Sew with a ⅝in seam allowance. Repeat with the second short border. Then pin one long border to the long side of the quilt, lining up the end squares with the short borders. Sew with a ⅝in seam allowance. Repeat with the second long border.

14 Cut a low loft batting a couple inches larger than your quilt top and a backing fabric (we used lovely soft minky fabric) a couple of inches larger than the batting. Layer these together with the batting in the middle. Smooth each layer thoroughly and then pin liberally each side of the quilt. Baste around the edges of the quilt using a ⅜in seam. Trim excess batting and backing.

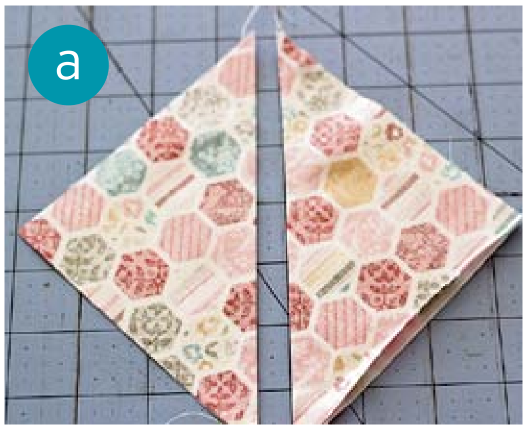
15 To bind, sew your fabric strips end to end on the bias. Press in half lengthwise and use to bind your quilt.

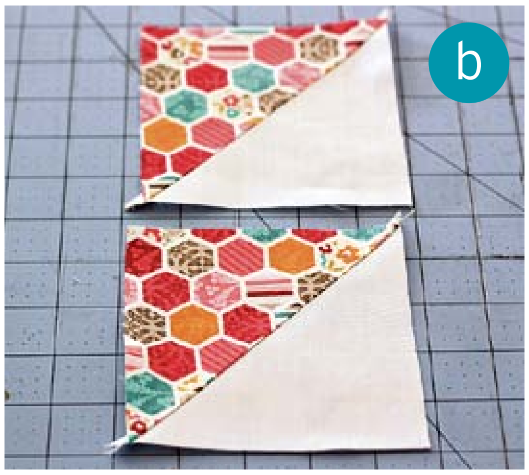
16 Using a large embroidery needle and floss, tack down the quilt in the puff intersections–it is not necessary to tack every intersection, every set of two will be sufficient. Knot the floss on the top of the quilt and trim the ends close to the knot.

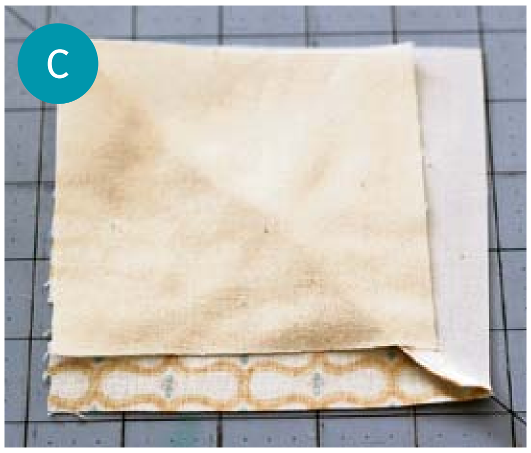


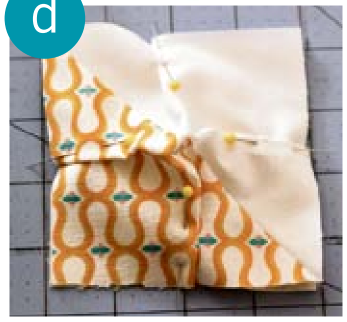
Arrange your half-square triangles to make on-trend chevrons!

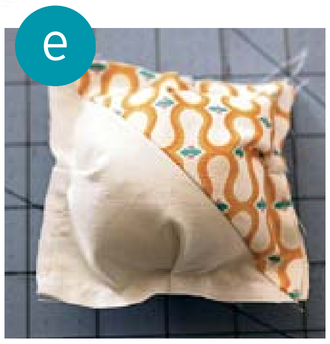
A soft, fleece backing makes this even more cuddly and warm.

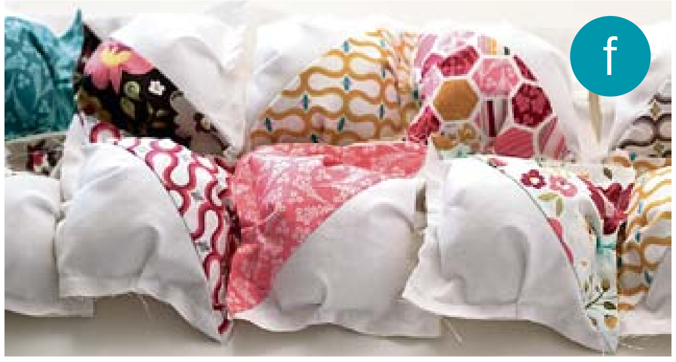




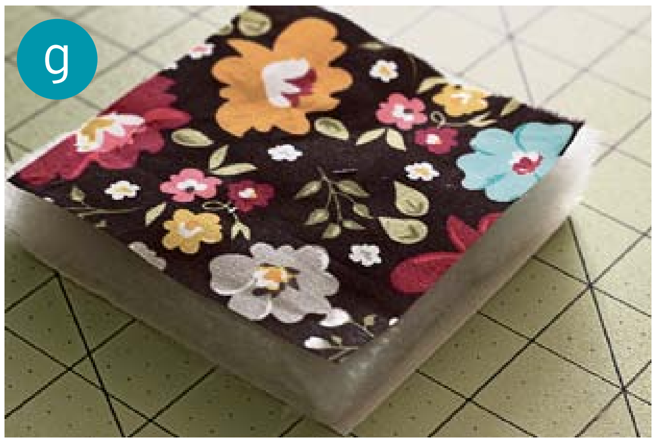


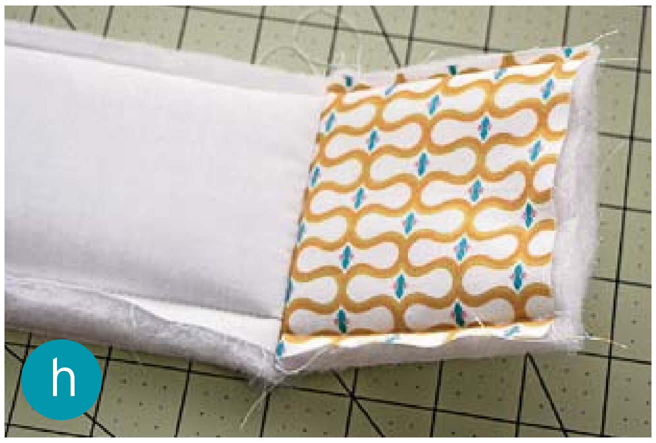


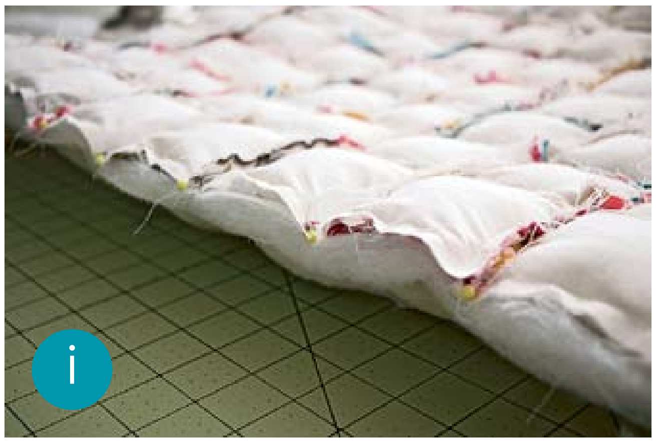




Once constructed this is quite a bulky quilt, so traditional quilting is impossible at home



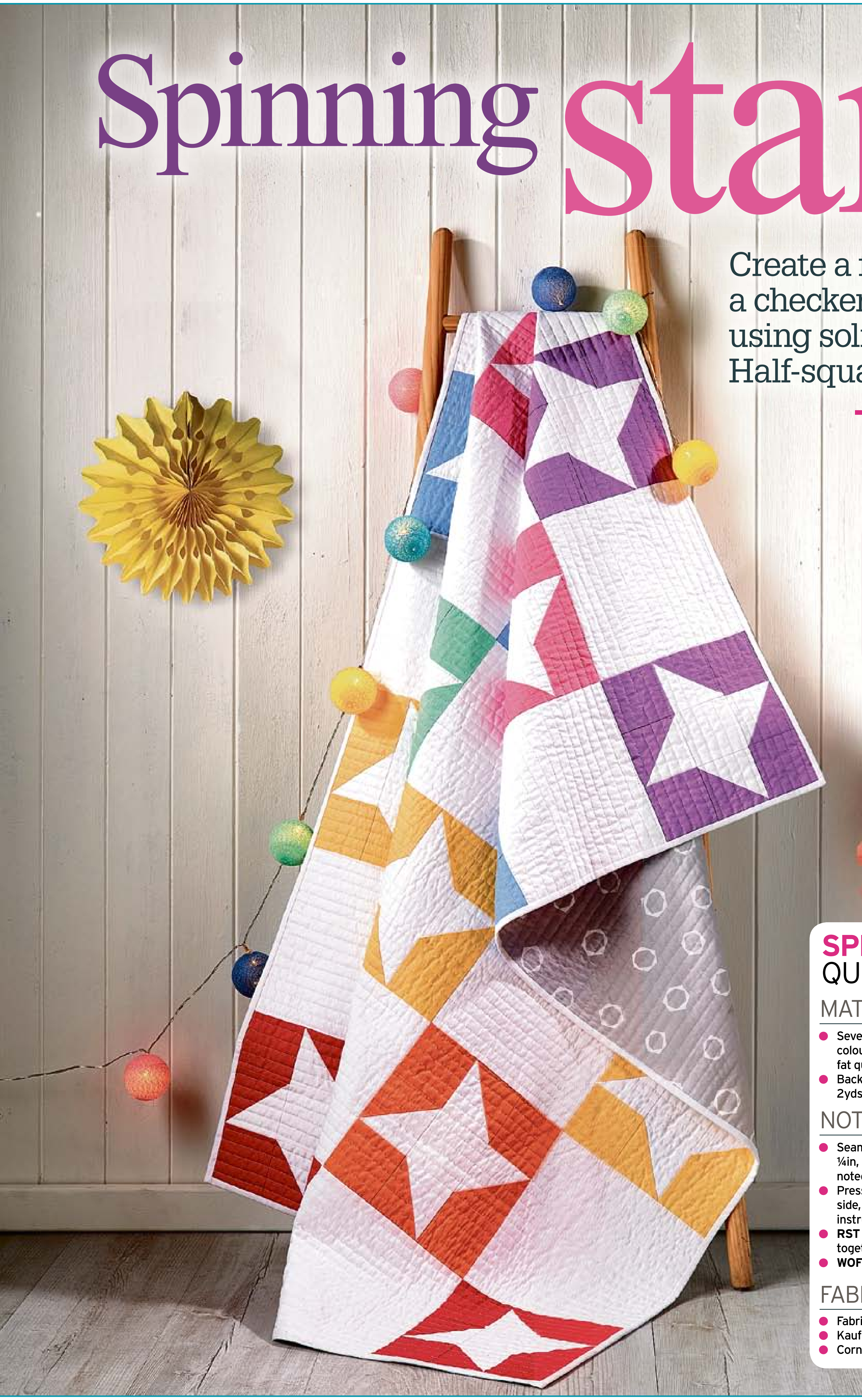




Spinning stars

Create a fresh quilt with a checkerboard effect using solid squares and Half-square Triangles

BY SARAH ASHFORD



SARAH ASHFORD

Modern quilter Sarah Ashford is an author, designer, quilting pattern creator and magazine contributor. *sarahashford studio.com*

SPINNING STARS QUILT

MATERIALS

- Seven (7) rainbow coloured fabrics: one (1) fat quarter each
- Background fabric: 2yds
- Backing fabric: 3yds
- Binding fabric: ½yd
- Batting: 50in x 70in

NOTES

- Seam allowances are ¼in, unless otherwise noted.
- Press seams to one side, unless otherwise instructed.
- **RST** = right sides together.
- **WOF** = width of fabric.
- **HST** = Half-square Triangles.
- Bleached white batting supplied by Hobbs Bonded Fibres (hobbsbatting.com) Project by Sarah Ashford.

FABRICS USED

- Fabrics are Kona Cotton Solids by Robert
- Kaufman in Punch, Mango, Banana, Pond,
- Cornflower, Bubblegum and Lupine.

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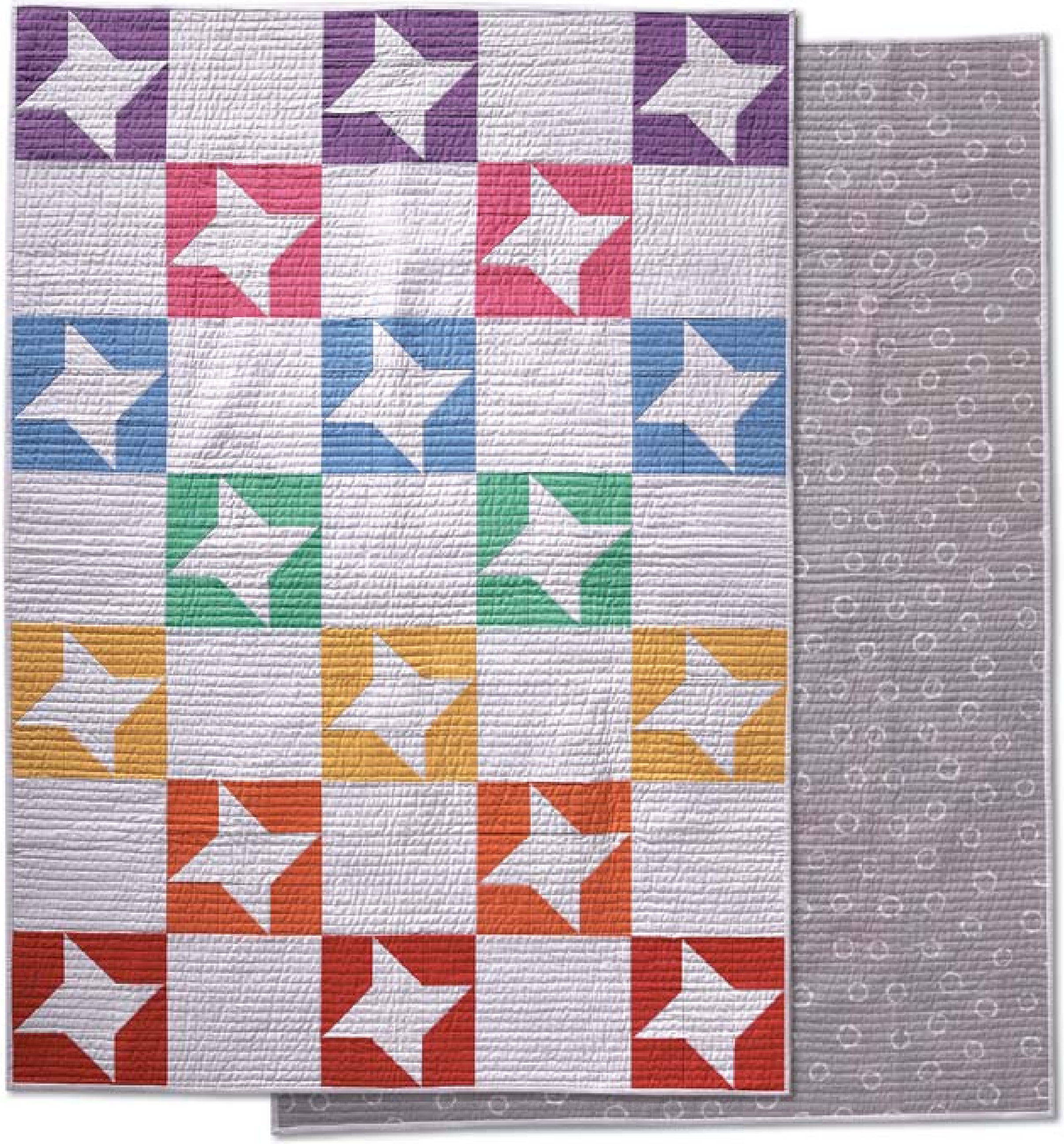


Use negative space between each star block to maximise the colour contrast in this simple design

CUTTING OUT

1 From each of the red, yellow, blue and dark purple fabrics cut:
- Twelve (12) 3½in squares.
- Six (6) 4¼in squares.

2 From each of the orange, green and pink fabrics cut:
- Eight (8) 3½in squares.
- Four (4) 4¼in squares.

3 From the background fabric cut:
- Eighteen (18) 3½in squares.
- Thirty six (36) 4¼in squares.
- Seventeen (17) 9½in squares.

4 From the binding fabric cut:
- Six (6) 2½in x WOF strips.

PIECING THE QUILT TOP

5 Draw a diagonal line from corner to corner on the reverse of all your background 4¼in squares. Place one RST with a red 4¼in square and sew ¼in either side of the line (**Fig A**). Cut along the drawn line to yield two HST units, and press towards the darker fabric. Trim each HST to 3½in square, centring the diagonal seam.

6 Repeat step 5, pairing each of your remaining rainbow coloured 4¼in squares with a background square.

7 Take four red/background HSTs, four red 3½in squares and one background 3½in square and arrange in three rows of three, referring to **Fig B** for placement. The HST units and white square should join together to make a star shape. Sew the units into rows, then sew the rows together to complete one star block.

8 Repeat step 7 to make three star blocks each from the red, yellow, blue and purple fabrics, and two blocks each from the orange, green and pink fabrics.

9 Arrange the star blocks and background 9½in squares in seven rows of five, referring to the photography for placement. Sew the blocks into rows, pressing seams towards the star blocks (**Fig C**). Sew the rows together, nesting seams, to complete the quilt top.

QUILTING AND FINISHING

10 Cut the backing fabric in half across the width. Remove the selvedges and sew the two pieces together using a ½in seam. Press the seam open.

11 Press the quilt top and backing well. Make a quilt sandwich by placing the backing fabric right side down, the batting on top, then place the quilt top centrally and right side up. Baste the layers together using your preferred method.

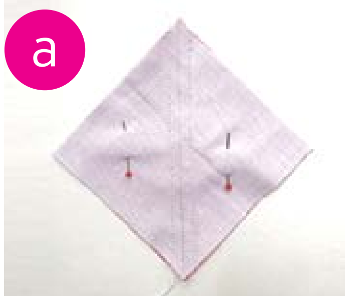
12 Quilt as desired. Sarah used straight line quilting to add texture to this simple design. Trim off the excess batting and backing fabric and square up the quilt.

13 Sew the binding strips together end-to-end using diagonal seams. Press the seams open. Then fold in half lengthways, wrong sides together, and press.

14 Sew the binding to the right side of the quilt, creating a neat mitre at each corner. Fold the binding over to the back of the quilt and hand stitch in place around the edges to finish.

Use the 2-in-1 HST method to sew the units for your blocks

a



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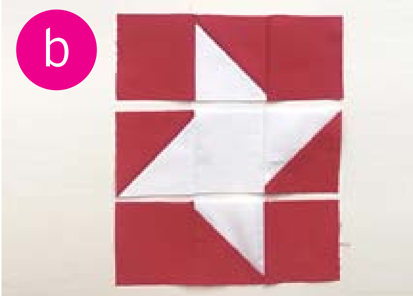

c

DAILY EXPRESS

Fever Pitch

ALL THE BEST ACTION, REACTION AND ANALYSIS

Harrison's last-gasp wonder goal leaves champions reeling

LEVEL BEST Reed and Antonee Robinson celebrate but Slot (below) was frustrated

FULHAM 2
LIVERPOOL 2
REPORT: PAGES 2-3

REED ALL ABOUT IT

SPURS BOOED OFF AFTER BROBBEY'S DAZZLER – SEE PAGES 4-5

EUROSPOT

CONTE TRIES TO KEEP THE PEACE

LAZIO	**0**
NAPOLI	**2**

Serie A

NAPOLI'S clash with Lazio saw three men sent off after a mass brawl.

Leonardo Spinazzola and Amir Rrahmani scored for Napoli to secure the three points for Antonio Conte's side.

But there was high drama in the closing minutes of the contest as a fight broke out between players from both clubs.

The incident was sparked when Lazio defender Adam Marusic clashed with Napoli full-back Pasquale Mazzocchi.

Marusic and Mazzocchi both began pushing each other while Lazio were in possession, with the game eventually stopped by referee Davide Massa.

Napoli boss Conte (above) intervened in an attempt to calm the brawl between players and staff from both teams.

Massa eventually handed out red cards to Marusic and Mazzocchi.

Earlier, Lazio star Tijjani Noslin was also shown a red card after picking up two bookings.

GREAT GONZO A HAT-TRICK HERO

REAL MADRID	**5**
REAL BETIS	**1**

La Liga

GONZALO GARCIA (above) opened his La Liga account with a superb hat-trick to inspire Real Madrid to a thumping win over Real Betis.

Filling in for Kylian Mbappe, sidelined with a knee injury, Garcia headed the hosts ahead in the 20th minute at the Bernabeu.

His second was a stunner, controlling on his chest, then volleying past Betis keeper Alvaro Valles to double the lead in the 50th minute. Raul Asencio piled on the misery for Manuel Pellegrini's side with a header six minutes later, his first senior goal.

Cucho Hernandez got one back Betis, but Garcia was not finished, the joint top scorer at the FIFA Club World Cup completing his hat-trick with a cute backheel after being picked out by Arda Guler.

Fran Garcia completed the rout from close range in added time as Xabi Alonso's side moved to within four points of table toppers Barcelona.

FUL OF GOALS (from top) Cottagers winger Harry Wilson breaks the deadlock before Florian Wirtz and Cody Gakpo turn the game around for Liverpool

HARRISON

Reed rocket pegs back champions after Gakpo's

FULHAM	**2**
LIVERPOOL	**2**

BY **JOHN CROSS**

EVERY time Liverpool think they have turned a corner, they get blown off course.

This time it was a 97th-minute Goal of the Season contender from Harrison Reed, which took the roof off Craven Cottage.

It was so cruel on Liverpool, who thought they had won it with Cody Gakpo's 95th-minute strike, which would have been a precious away win for Arne Slot's side.

But the away supporters were still celebrating when supersub Reed, who has only scored four since joining the club six years ago, unleashed his 25-yard Exocet into the top corner.

It was no more than Fulham deserved, but the Anfield outfit just cannot catch a break in this bizarre roller-coaster season.

Florian Wirtz had drawn them level after Harry Wilson's opener, which, up until the injury-time drama, had been a game all about tight VAR margins.

Cottagers forward Wilson was initially flagged off before VAR showed he was played onside by Virgil van Dijk's elbow.

Then Wirtz's leveller also stood, thanks to VAR, and you might have thought the story was going to be about the £116m midfielder beginning to turn things around.

That was his second goal in four league games, in which he also supplied an assist, and the way he dug in echoed his side's determination to turn this game around.

The VAR check on his goal took forever. The Premier League does use semi-automated technology and they also use slightly thicker lines to give the attacker the benefit of the doubt.

It was definitely that close.

But we should not be talking about VAR. We should be talking about glory and the wonderful moments. Reed's stunner was just glorious and Craven Cottage has witnessed some magic this season already.

Fulham had pushed Manchester City all the way in a nine-goal thriller last month and this was another roller coaster as Marco Silva's scrappers appeared to have the measure of Slot's (left) team.

Last season, they drew at Anfield and beat Liverpool during the title run-in. And their hex struck again on what was another day of frustration for

WAR BABIES
THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN OF WWII
ON SALE IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS AND AMAZON
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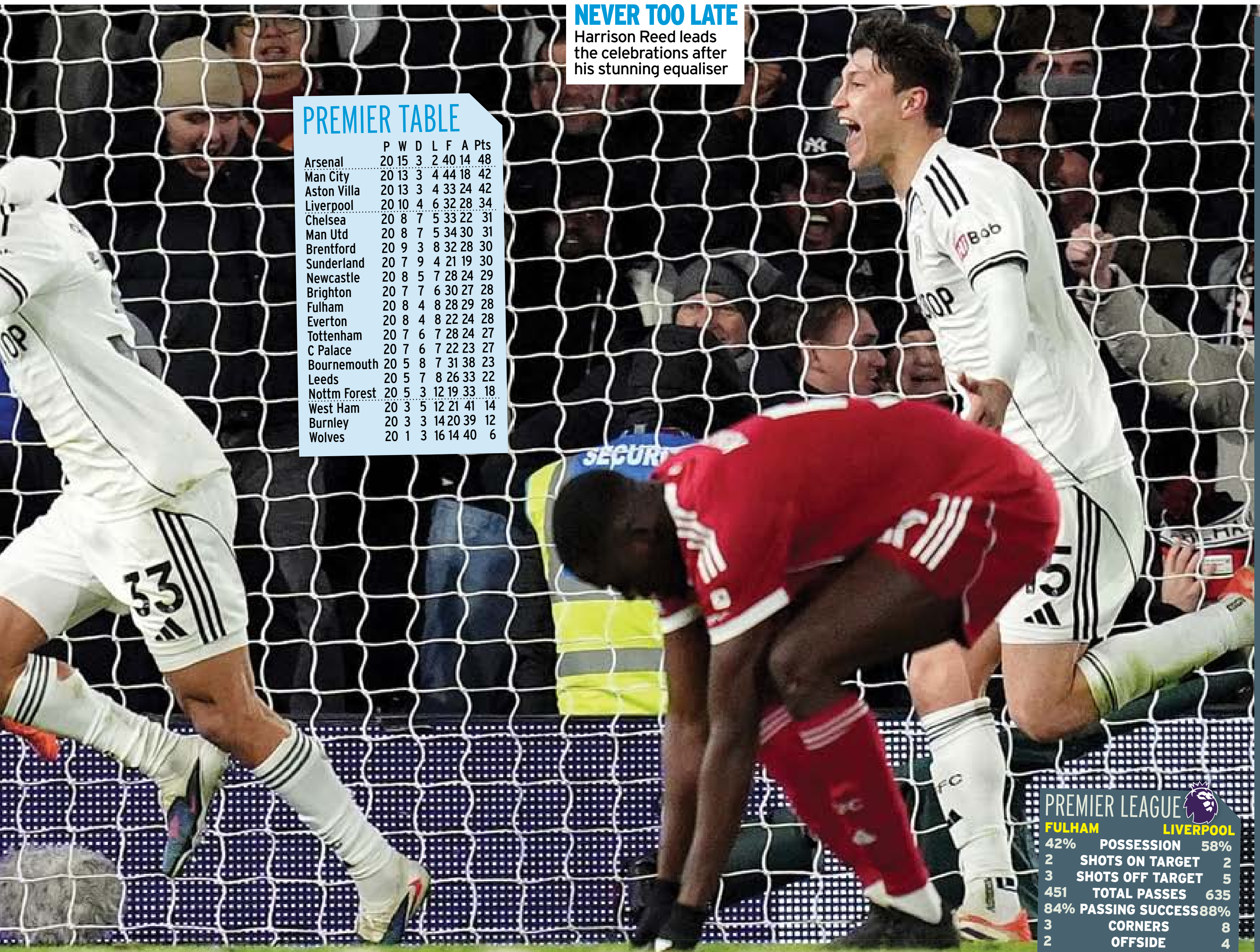

NEVER TOO LATE
Harrison Reed leads the celebrations after his stunning equaliser

PREMIER TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	20	15	3	2	40	14	48
Man City	20	13	3	4	44	18	42
Aston Villa	20	13	3	4	33	24	42
Liverpool	20	10	4	6	32	28	34
Chelsea	20	8	7	5	33	22	31
Man Utd	20	8	7	5	34	30	31
Brentford	20	9	3	8	32	28	30
Sunderland	20	7	9	4	21	19	30
Newcastle	20	8	5	7	28	24	29
Brighton	20	7	7	6	30	27	28
Fulham	20	8	4	8	28	29	28
Everton	20	8	4	8	22	24	28
Tottenham	20	7	6	7	28	24	27
C Palace	20	7	6	7	22	23	27
Bournemouth	20	5	8	7	31	38	23
Leeds	20	5	7	8	26	33	22
Nottm Forest	20	5	3	12	19	33	18
West Ham	20	3	5	12	21	41	14
Burnley	20	3	3	14	20	39	12
Wolves	20	1	3	16	14	40	6

FLOORED

last-gasp goal looked to have clinched win

the visitors from Merseyside. This was a chance to pull clear in the battle for the top four, but was yet another chance wasted in a season all about inconsistency and sloppiness.

This time they looked weak up front, with Hugo Ekitike missing through a minor injury, Mo Salah away on AFCON duty and Alexander Isak out injured.

Gakpo played up front with Wirtz and Dominik Szoboszlai in the supporting roles, while, again, the Reds' defence just looked so vulnerable when under pressure.

Fulham took a first-half lead when Raul Jimenez played in Wilson, who raced through and smashed in a low shot past diving Liverpool keeper Alisson and into the far corner.

Ex-Liverpool starlet Wilson turned away with his hands on his head, thinking he was offside. Maybe that was why he relaxed and finished with so much style. But VAR footage showed that Van Dijk's shoulder played him onside.

Nothing was going Gakpo's way as he headed against the post and had the ball in the net only to have drifted offside.

The Premier League champions levelled after 57 minutes when Conor Bradley's run set up Wirtz, who finished in style.

VAR came to his rescue after another offside flag. It was wide open. Jimenez went through, Alisson raced out and Wilson chipped onto the crossbar before Van Dijk's last-gasp clearance.

Then sub Jeremie Frimpong's brilliant low cross set up Gakpo, who thought he had won it, until Reed's incredible late, late intervention. What a finish!

FULHAM (3-4-2-1): Leno; Diop, Andersen, Cuenca; Castagne, Lukic (Reed 90), Cairney (Berge 74), Robinson; Wilson (Traore 85), Smith Rowe (Kevin 74); Jimenez (Kusi-Asare 85).

LIVERPOOL (4-2-3-1): Alisson; Bradley, Konate, Van Dijk, Kerkez; Gravenberch, Mac Allister; Szoboszlai, Wirtz (Frimpong 76), Jones (Chiesa 85); Gakpo (Gomez 90).

PREMIER LEAGUE

FULHAM		LIVERPOOL
42%	POSSESSION	58%
2	SHOTS ON TARGET	2
3	SHOTS OFF TARGET	5
451	TOTAL PASSES	635
84%	PASSING SUCCESS	88%
3	CORNERS	8
2	OFFSIDE	4
11	FOULS	4
0 1	CARDS	1 0

REF: Craig Pawson **ATT:** 27,547

MAN OF THE MATCH
HARRY WILSON

Slot comes agonisingly close again

BY **JOHN CROSS**

ARNE SLOT admitted Liverpool only had themselves to blame after Harrison Reed's last-gasp wonder strike denied them victory.

Fulham supersub Reed scored his first goal since April 2023 and his stunning 25-yard blast came in the 97th minute, just after Cody Gakpo had put the visitors (looking dejected above and below) ahead.

Liverpool boss Slot said: "I've experienced this for months now. They score with their first chance and it is not for the first time this season that we have conceded in the final seconds of the game.

"I liked our second half more than our first half. We controlled the game and a few times were close - two disallowed goals, hitting the bar, a goal. That is ideally what you want to see when you have so many attacking players out.

"Once in a while the boys should get a reward, but we do not get it and once again the only one to blame is ourselves.

"It's not for the first time this season that we fight so hard and think we have a win but concede an incredible strike."

Reed said: "I came on and then two minutes later they scored so I did my best to keep the boys going.

"I knew we were going to get another chance. I thought it would be a bit more clear-cut than that but it came to me nicely.

"What a feeling. Not sure on the celebration, I was a bit everywhere, but a deserved point definitely."

Fulham manager Marco Silva questioned why VAR took so long to award Florian Wirtz's goal when the still pictures made him look offside.

"It took an astonishing amount of time," said Silva.

"I thought it was offside. The stadium thought it was offside, but you have to trust the lines."

WAR BABIES THE FORGOTTEN CHILDREN OF WWII
ON SALE IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS AND AMAZON
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MARTI CALL FOR CALMNESS

Leicester v West Brom
Championship, tonight, 8pm

MARTI CIFUENTES has urged protesting Leicester fans to get behind his mis-firing Foxes.

Thousands of unhappy supporters are set to boycott tonight's visit by West Brom to show their frustration at the club's ownership and the lack of progress on the pitch under the unpopular Spanish head coach.

Leicester are currently seven points off the Championship top six after an inconsistent campaign that's seen them win just six of the last 21 games following relegation from the Premier League.

Cifuentes (right) said: "I'm not aware of anything in terms of a protest. I know that as a team we're not in a situation we'd like to be and I understand the frustrations of many fans.

"I've been in situations like this before. Everybody's free to express their opinion but at the same time, the only way to improve things is to stay together. I'm aware of the expectations and the club's ambitions.

"The last time out at home against Derby, the atmosphere in the stadium was fantastic and I hope the fans can help us to get the three points."

Cifuentes' West Brom counterpart Ryan Mason is also under pressure as the relegation-threatened Baggies look to avoid a 10th straight away defeat.

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JOY AND FURY
Davies bags a rare goal as he slots home but (below) tempers flare

TOTTENHAM 1
SUNDERLAND 1

BY **NEIL McLEMAN**

THOMAS FRANK'S timid Tottenham were booed off their own pitch after the same old story back home in the New Year.

Ben Davies had been set to be the unlikely hero when the Wales defender scored the opener on his first start to the season.

At that stage, the Europa League winners had overtaken Sunderland and climbed into the top 10 in the Premier League table.

But the Black Cats dominated the second half and were rewarded when Brian Brobbey lashed home an 80th-minute equaliser.

Regis Le Bris's side are now five games unbeaten after holding Manchester City and now Spurs in their last two outings.

It is their longest run without defeat in the top-flight since a streak of six under Sam Allardyce in 2016.

Spurs have now got one win and two draws from their last three games. But the north London club – with the motto To Dare Is To Do – have never been just about the stats.

After Frank was booed by the travelling fans on his return to Brentford for a dreadful goalless draw last week, this time the home faithful showed their displeasure with the style and intent of this uninspiring team who remain in unlucky 13th place.

Tottenham won only four home Premier League games in 2025 – and lost a record 11 – and are now off to a worryingly slow start in 2026.

Frank worked miracles in lifting Brentford into the top flight but the likable Dane lacks the drama of his predecessor Ange Postecoglou on and off the pitch.

Spurs are still missing Dominic Solanke, Dejan Kuluveski and James Maddison but have to aspire to more than this.

Sunderland showed more imagination and drive in the second half. As for Spurs, it finished badly and had not started promisingly for Frank.

His right-winger Mohammed Kudus limped off in the first game since selling Brennan Johnson.

The only early entertainment for the Spurs faithful was the pantomime booing – and one huge cheer when he slipped taking a corner – for former Arsenal midfielder Granit Xhaka.

Spurs and Frank needed a goal. And it came after 30 minutes from a set-piece.

Mathias Tel's corner reached Cristiano Romero at the far post and his low cross found Micky van de Ven before Davies applied the finishing touch inside the six-yard box. It was Tottenham's ninth goal from a corner this season – only Arsenal with 11 have scored more – and Davies' first Tottenham goal since December 2023.

Now 32 and on his sixth permanent manager, the club's longest serving player had suffered a hamstring injury this season but has only regained his place with Djed Spence's loss of form.

Sunderland improved dramatically after the break and Romero gave the ball away to allow Brobbey to bring a near-post save from Guglielmo Vicario.

And Enzo Le Fee hit the base of the post with a header before Brobbey found the net to crown the best move of the match.

Xhaka found Nordi Mukieli, who fed Brobbey. The Dutch striker exchanged passes with Le Fee before lashing a left-footed shot into the top corner for his third goal of the campaign.

Tottenham's afternoon was summed up when sub Lucas Bergvall dropped the ball for a foul throw.

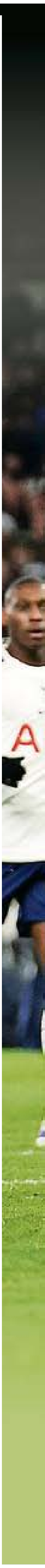
PREMIER LEAGUE

TOTTENHAM		SUNDERLAND
49%	POSSESSION	51%
5	SHOTS ON TARGET	3
6	SHOTS OFF TARGET	4
360	TOTAL PASSES	382
79%	PASSING SUCCESS	77%
3	CORNERS	5
4	OFFSIDE	2
9	FOULS	6
🟥 0 🟨 2	CARDS	🟨 3 🟥 0

REF: Stuart Attwell **ATT:** 60,877

MAN OF THE MATCH
GRANIT XHAKA

TOTTENHAM (4-2-3-1): Vicario; Porro, Romero, van de Ven, Davies (Spence 88); Bentancur, Gray (Palhinha 72); Kuddus (Kolo Muani 19), Odobert (Bergvall 72), Tel (Scarlett 88); Richarlison.
SUNDERLAND (4-4-2): Roefs; Geertruida, Mukiele, Alderete, Cirkin (Mundle 59); Hume, Xhaka, Le Fée, Adingra (Ballard 66); Mayenda (Rigg 82); Brobbey.



TOTTENHAM'S STRIFE OF BRIAN

Frank's flops booed off as Brobbey stuns home crowd

HIT AND BLISS
Brobbey smashes the ball home and (below) celebrates in style

THOMAS: 'BIGGER PICTURE' TO BREN EXIT

BY **NEIL McLEMAN**

THOMAS FRANK claimed there was a "bigger picture" to selling Brennan Johnson after Mohammed Kudus limped off against Sunderland.

The Wales striker was Tottenham's top scorer with 18 goals last season, including the winner in the Europa League final.

But after the summer signing of Kudus, Johnson started just three of Tottenham's last 16 league matches and was sold for £35million to Crystal Palace.

"Sometimes the decisions make more sense further down the line," said Frank.

Former West Ham winger Kudus, who appeared to suffer a thigh strain, has now joined the lengthening Spurs injury list with no new signings imminent. After seeing his team get booed off after the 1-1 draw, Frank said: "Decisions are made and decisions I'm backing in every aspect.

"There's always more bigger picture stuff to some of those decisions. Sometimes it can look like perfect timing. Sometimes it looks like not so perfect timing." Regis Le Bris (left) insisted his Sunderland are not safe despite reaching 30 points – enough to stay up in the last two seasons.

"It is really positive at this point to have 30 points," said the Frenchman. "We need 10 more probably so it is time to move on and ride the wave. Are we safe? I would like but not yet. We were probably a bit lucky as we conceded only one goal in the first half."

NO TRAVEL SICKNESS IN HECK OF WIN

BRISTOL CITY	**0**
PRESTON	**2**

Championship

PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM'S travel-weary troops are looking forward to a night in their own beds after Preston's latest away-day success.

North End moved up to fourth on the back of consecutive wins and an impressive run of one defeat in the last 10 games as they underlined their promotion credentials with a stand-out smash-and-grab at Ashton Gate.

Preston have been putting in the motorway miles during a hectic festive period of games and boss Heckingbottom said: "I thought it was a really strong away performance.

"There were some big individual displays as well, and a good finish to these four matches we've had in 10 days.

"We've had six days of travelling and three overnight stays so it's a big credit to all the group because everyone on the pitch has been fantastic. We were dangerous all game and probably the only blemish was not creating more goalscoring opportunities.

"Bristol City are one of the most dangerous teams in the league because of how they counter-press so it shows you how well we defended."

On-loan Aston Villa winger Lewis Dobbin (above) put the Lilywhites ahead after eight minutes as he slid the ball past City keeper Max O'Leary.

Another Premier League youngster, Alfie Devine – on loan from Tottenham – doubled the lead after half-time when his precision low drive found the bottom corner.

Former Ipswich skipper Sam Morsy made his debut for the Robins, who drop to 10th after missing a chance to climb back into the play-off places.

Boss Gerhard Struber said: "It's a big frustration for me and my boys are really disappointed right now.

"We played well at times but made it easy for them with their goals. On each occasion we were not sharp enough to come out and clear.

"Then at the other end we were not ruthless or clinical enough. Preston are a really good, organised team."

EASY AS 1-2-3
Thiago had gone six games without a goal before treble versus Everton – now only Haaland has more Prem goals this term

IGOR TO PLEASE

Bees' hat-trick hero buzzing as they chase top-four spot

BALL SPARK
Thiago with matchball at end; boss Andrews' delight at win (inset)

EVERTON 2
BRENTFORD 4

BY **CARL MARKHAM**

IGOR THIAGO ended a six-match drought with a first Premier League hat-trick to fire Brentford to within four points of the top four.

The Brazilian took his tally to 14 with his first goals since the end of November and only Manchester City's Erling Haaland has scored more in the Premier League.

Head coach Keith Andrews continues to confound his critics as he equalled the biggest win of his short stint in charge – against Bournemouth last weekend – as they put four past an Everton side which had four clean sheets in their last six games.

Nathan Collins headed home the other as the Bees scored their first from a corner in the league at the 96th attempt, and Beto's 66th-minute response and Thierno Barry's goal in added time barely papered over the cracks.

Everton should be looking to emulate Brentford: canny recruitment off the pitch – Thiago cost marginally more than Barry or Beto but has scored nine more league goals than the pair combined – and organised yet effective on it.

The fact Kevin Schade opted for Brentford when there was interest from the Toffees two summers ago showed how low the club's reputation had dropped in the wake of off-field financial problems and several relegation battles.

But even taking into account a threadbare squad, manager David Moyes is not getting value for money from a number of individuals while suffering a heavy defeat on a day when both his underperforming strikers scored.

Jack Grealish, on loan from Manchester City, provided both assists and would have had another in first-half added time had Caoimhin Kelleher not kept out Barry's diving header. But with Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall injured, and Iliman Ndiaye at the Africa Cup of Nations, the burden is all on him to carry the attack.

The £40million spent on 19-year-old Tyler Dibling, making his third consecutive start, was a punt on potential when they need proven performers while James Tarkowski, whose mistake led to the opening goal before he was beaten to a corner for the second, is also looking less than reliable.

Everton's two early chances saw Dwight McNeil denied by Kelleher and Thiago clear Tarkowski's header off the line, but they then shot themselves in the foot.

Tarkowski's pass to Tim Iroegbunam was weak and ill-advised as the midfielder was sandwiched between Schade and Vitaly Janelt, and the latter seized the ball and crossed for Thiago to cushion a low volley past Jordan Pickford.

When Yehor Yarmolyuk presented a similar opportunity to Iroegbunam, he could only shoot wide.

Grealish's loose backheel on the touchline saw Janelt profit again, this time from the right, and his cross was turned home by Schade.

Collins and Thiago scored within two minutes of each other to put the result beyond doubt as early as the 51st minute, but Brentford's centre-forward was not to be denied his hat-trick even after Everton briefly threatened a comeback.

EVERTON (4-2-3-1): Pickford; O'Brien, Tarkowski, Keane, Mykolenko; Iroegbunam (Armstrong 77), Garner; Dibling (Beto 46), McNeil (Rohl 46), Grealish; Barry.

BRENTFORD (4-2-3-1): Kelleher; Kayode, Ajer, Collins, Hickey (Henry 76); Yarmolyuk, Janelt; Jensen (Henderson 64), Damsgaard, Schade (Lewis-Potter 64); Thiago (Peart-Harris 90).

PREMIER LEAGUE

EVERTON		BRENTFORD
45%	POSSESSION	55%
6	SHOTS ON TARGET	7
3	SHOTS OFF TARGET	2
364	TOTAL PASSES	456
79%	PASSING SUCCESS	78%
4	CORNERS	5
0	OFFSIDE	2
9	FOULS	8
🟥 0 🟨 0	CARDS	🟨 2 🟥 0

REF: Anthony Taylor

MAN OF THE MATCH
IGOR THIAGO

UP THERE WITH KANE AND KYLIAN

BY **CARL MARKHAM**

BRENTFORD head coach Keith Andrews believes Igor Thiago's form means he deserves to be mentioned alongside some of Europe's top strikers.

The 24-year-old's first Premier League hat-trick means only Erling Haaland, Kylian Mbappe and Harry Kane have scored more in Europe's top five leagues this season.

And he needs just two more goals to become the highest-scoring Brazilian in a single Premier League campaign.

"Not bad, is it? I thought the finishes were outstanding, really clinical, calm and confident," said Andrews.

"The three names you mentioned – he's in pretty esteemed company there, but he's earned it.

"He was injured for a lot of last season and settled into the club behind the scenes. But he is such a popular player and person amongst our group he deserves everything he gets.

"He works so hard and the goals come off the back of that unselfish way he plays, because he leaves everything out there." A mistake by James Tarkowski led to Thiago's opener and Everton boss David Moyes said: "We gave away a terrible goal and the rest of the half we never got to grips with it.

"At home we are trying to be more open and work to make things happen, and they punished us when we did that."

HAPPY BRU YEAR

Skipper Guimaraes gets Magpies' busy January off to a flyer

SCREAM TEAM Guimaraes heads Toon into the lead (above) and then celebrates

PREMIER LEAGUE

NEWCASTLE		C PALACE
59%	POSSESSION	41%
7	SHOTS ON TARGET	1
3	SHOTS OFF TARGET	5
487	TOTAL PASSES	346
82%	PASSING SUCCESS	70%
8	CORNERS	6
5	OFFSIDE	2
5	FOULS	12
0 1	CARDS	3 0

REF: John Brooks **ATT:** 51,979

MAN OF THE MATCH
BRUNO GUIMARAES

NEWCASTLE 2
C PALACE 0

BY **DAMIAN SPELLMAN**

BRUNO GUIMARAES was Newcastle's hero as the Magpies emerged from the first of nine games in 28 days this month with the win they craved.

Toon boss Eddie Howe had spent the build up to the game dealing with criticism from some supporters about the perceived lack of a 'plan B'.

And while United had to wait until the second half to make the breakthrough against Crystal Palace, Howe's tactics did eventually pay dividends.

Guimaraes put the Magpies in front with a 71st-minute header, his seventh goal of the season, and then sent in the corner from which defender Malick Thiaw stabbed home the second (inset).

The clean sheet, Newcastle's first in 13 attempts, provided another reason for Howe to be cheerful.

Prior to Newcastle's opener, Palace had given as good as they got despite the Magpies having two first-half goals ruled out for offside, although they were unable to make keeper Nick Pope work often enough to reap the rewards of their decent play, which £35million debutant Brennan Johnson played his part in.

The hosts might have been in front within three minutes when Yoane Wissa fired his first-time effort straight at keeper Dean Henderson.

Palace settled, but the Magpies continued to press and Henderson had to make a fine reaction save from Fabian Schar's 17th-minute header after the keeper had punched Wissa's cross straight to Lewis Hall. Newcastle thought they had taken the lead two minutes later when Wissa ran on to Guimaraes' through ball and crossed for Gordon to score, but a VAR check came to the visitors' rescue.

As an intense midfield battle unfolded with Joelinton and Tonali prominent for the hosts, and Adam Wharton and Will Hughes making in-roads for Palace, the ball changed hands at regular intervals, although genuine chances were at a premium. Henderson did well to keep out Hall's 42nd-minute piledriver seconds before Joelinton saw a strike ruled out for offside, but Thiaw deflected Jean-Philippe Mateta's snapshot from a Johnson cross wide, and Hughes poked a shot past the post after being played in by Yeremy Pino on the stroke of half-time.

Tyrick Mitchell was in the right place at the right time to block Tonali's 62nd-minute shot after Gordon and Hall had linked down the left, but Pope got down well to keep out Johnson's 65th-minute attempt after Wharton had got the better of substitute Tino Livramento in midfield.

Guimaraes hit the bar directly from a 68th-minute corner, but it was he who finally broke the deadlock with 19 minutes remaining when he headed home from close range after Miley had turned substitute Harvey Barnes' cross back across goal.

Henderson clawed a Barnes header out of his bottom corner to keep Palace's hopes alive, but they died seconds later when he could only palm Guimaraes' set-piece to Thiaw, who made no mistake from close range.

The Palace keeper then denied Barnes with a foot before substitute Joe Willock fired wide of an open goal from the rebound, but the points were already banked.

NEWCASTLE (4-3-3): Pope; Miley, Thiaw, Schar, Hall (Livramento 63); Guimaraes, Tonali (Ramsey 63), Joelinton; Jacob Murphy (Willock 88), Wissa (Woltemade 78), Gordon (Barnes 63).

PALACE (3-4-2-1): Henderson; Lerma (Canvot 38), Lacroix, Guehi; Clyne (Devenny 52), Wharton (Rodney 87), Hughes, Mitchell; Johnson (Uche 72), Pino (Esse 87); Mateta (Drakes-Thomas 87).

HOWE: BIG GAME... HUGE PLAYER

BY **SIMON CASS**

EDDIE HOWE praised Bruno Guimaraes for settling Newcastle's nerves against a stubborn Crystal Palace side.

The Magpies saw first-half efforts from Anthony Gordon and Joelinton chalked off for offside. But skipper Guimaraes eventually headed Newcastle ahead before his corner teed-up Malick Thiaw for the clincher.

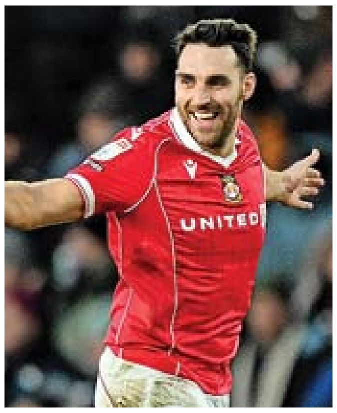
"This was always going to be decided by a key moment, and Bruno came up with a big one," said Howe (below).

"He is a special player, person, and character.

"He played a captain's role. This was a big game for us and it was decided by a huge player. We knew today was going to be tough and we had to be patient. The disallowed goals were two good moves. We needed the first goal, there were nerves in the stadium.

"The players had to deal with that. We were better as the game went on."

Palace's winless run in all competitions is now seven games and boss Oliver Glasner said: "We can't defend set-plays. Four at Leeds, two today and one at Tottenham. It is not acceptable."



MATT FINISH MAKES REDS CONTENDERS

DERBY COUNTY 1
WREXHAM 2

Championship

MATTY JAMES' first goal for nine months was worth the wait as a fourth straight win pushed Wrexham into play-off contention.

The veteran midfielder's stunning 30-yard strike restored the Welsh side's lead as they saw-off the Rams to move within a point of the top six.

Reds boss Phil Parkinson said: "For the first 15 minutes we were excellent and created some great chances. It's exactly how we thought it would go, we had good control and they're a counter-attacking team with decent pace.

"The one moment we allowed that to happen [a counter], they got back in it. We said to the lads at half time that if we could play in the same manner, with the same quality, we'd get chances."

Sam Smith struck his fourth goal of the campaign midway through the first-half to give Wrexham the lead. Derby levelled before half time as Ben Brereton Diaz coolly slotted beyond Arthur Okonkwo.

James' (above) strike – his first since April 2025 – shortly after half time earned Parkinson's men all three points to seal a 100 percent record over the festive period.

Rams boss John Eustace insisted his mid-table side deserved something from the game, but admitted they paid the price for slow starts to each half.

He said: "We were good for at least a point, even though the way we started the game wasn't great, and going a goal down was poor.

"We grew into the first half, scored a great goal and felt very comfortable.

"I thought we were very strong but then we started the second half like we started the first.

"We wanted to go out there and be on the front foot, but we made a couple of mistakes and got punished by a fantastic goal.

"We huffed and puffed, and just lacked that bit of quality in the final third to make something happen."

Both teams are next in FA Cup third round action – Wrexham host Nottingham Forest on Friday while Derby do likewise for Leeds on Sunday lunchtime.

KOLLI'S READY TO DOUBLE UP ON HAMMERS

QPR	**3**
SHEFFIELD WED	**0**

Championship

RAYAN KOLLI is determined to pile on the misery for West Ham after his late double sealed QPR's return to winning ways.

The 20-year-old forward came off the bench to help fire Rangers to a first victory in four to rekindle their play-off push in a perfect tonic for Sunday's all-London FA Cup clash with the relegation-threatened Hammers.

After his first Championship goals of the season, the Algerian Under-20s star (above) said: "I'm hearing we've got 9,000 fans heading to the London Stadium.

"It's special to have that support and backing from our fans. I don't see why we can't go there and cause a little upset to get ourselves into the next round because they are not in the best of form.

"To get both goals in front of The Loft today is a special feeling – the best feeling for me.

"It was important to get back to winning ways, especially after the last couple of games, so I'm happy to come on and contribute to the team.

"For the first goal, I saw the defender wanting me to take it inside, so I went back onto my right foot and got a good strike on it. For the second, I managed to get on the end of it and put it into the back of the net."

Rumarn Burrell put Rangers ahead with his 10th goal of the season before limping off with a hamstring injury to give Kolli his chance to impress.

Sheffield Wednesday were well off the pace and it's 19 games since their only league win of the season back in September.

Their relegation fate could be sealed as early as next month and beleaguered Owls boss Henrik Pedersen said: "We competed for 80 minutes on a very equal level.

"Of course we're not happy we're losing, but we have to look at where we are, where we're coming from and how we're competing."

CLANGER

HEAVEN & YELL
Evanilson wheels away in celebration as Gabriel rues his howler

Cook has all ingredients

LEWIS COOK loved the fact Bournemouth showed how to compete against the country's best team – but now he wants them to show it for a full 90 minutes.

The midfielder (above, tripping Gabriel Jesus) came on for the final 16 minutes as Andoni Iraola's team lost 3-2.

The first half saw the Cherries take the lead and frustrate the Gunners, particularly in their strong area of midfield.

Cook said: "We were good in large spells of the game. We competed really well and we were in the game.

"Unfortunately we couldn't get the goals to get a point.

"Against a top side, we know we have to be at our best for 90 minutes of a game to get even a point.

"They take their moments, they are a great team, well drilled. I do feel like when we are at our best, we can compete with a team like that. I think we showed that, it just wasn't enough."

Defeat left the Cherries without a win in 11 league fixtures, but Cook said there are positive signs.

"We are on a bit of a winless run, but we have picked up points and had some good performances in a tough run," he added.

"We have to reflect on them, take the positives and move them into every game."

PREMIER LEAGUE

BOURNEMOUTH		ARSENAL
43%	POSSESSION	57%
3	SHOTS ON TARGET	5
7	SHOTS OFF TARGET	3
339	TOTAL PASSES	462
76%	PASSING SUCCESS	80%
7	CORNERS	5
1	OFFSIDE	1
13	FOULS	8
🟥 0 🟨 3	CARDS	🟨 1 🟥 0

REF: Chris Kavanagh **ATT:** 11,240

MAN OF THE MATCH
DECLAN RICE

ROAR POWER
Pumped-up Gabriel shows his delight after his Arsenal equaliser

TO BANGER

Unflappable Gab is living the redeem (again) as he picks himself up to blast back after blunder

BOURNEMOUTH	**2**
ARSENAL	**3**

BY **TOM CANTON**

THERE comes a time in almost every title bid when a question is asked, the answer to which will inform us if the challenge is real.

When Gabriel's horribly misplaced pass found its way to a grateful Evanilson to open the scoring after 10 minutes, there was a chance of this game turning into a long night for Arsenal.

There was also the reality that if that had happened, Manchester City would have had renewed hope of piling on the pressure 24 hours later.

To respond so quickly showed great resilience from the Brazil defender and from his teammates, as manager Mikel Arteta acknowledged.

"It's part of football and it's about how you react to the next action," he said. "You need to have a short memory to be at the top constantly.

"With a positive action it happens the same because there's another one that is the most important one.

"But today, especially when you concede a goal after that, it's really tough to do it mentally, especially with what is at stake. So I'm impressed with what he's done."

It is not the first time Gabriel has done something like this. In August 2022, after losing the ball to Aleksandar Mitrovic against Fulham, he scored a late winner to atone for his mistake.

The reaction from the travelling fans on Saturday was also telling. As soon as the players were walking back to the centre circle following the mistake, Gabriel's chant was being sung loudly by the fans, who would be singing it for very different reasons soon after when he levelled.

As if that show of resilience was not enough to warm Arteta on a cold night, Declan Rice (below) proved almost superhuman in how his body went from being impossible to play against Aston Villa to completing the full game against Bournemouth.

"He was so disappointed not to play against Villa," added Arteta. "He really wanted it. He tried in the morning, he was nowhere near.

"He wanted to train the next day, it wasn't a possibility. Until the last minute, I asked him, 'How are you feeling?' He said, 'I'm in'. And he showed that he was big time in."

Big time indeed, scoring twice before Eli Junior Kroupi replied and the first coming courtesy of Martin Odegaard, who was also involved in the build-up for the second.

Three goal contributions in three games for him and with Martin Zubimendi also scoring against Aston Villa, the Arsenal midfield appears to have found its shape. Rice revealed that he had to shout for the pass and his skipper responded: "Martin, he was going to shoot but he heard me shout.

"I have not scored many from outside the box this season. I was happy with that."

For the fourth Premier League match in a row, Eberechi Eze was nowhere to be seen. Noni Madueke and Gabriel Martinelli were both given starts, but the £63m summer signing was left on the bench.

Liverpool are up next and the fixture is exactly why you spend a significant fee on a player like Eze.

But the likelihood is that he will again be a sub, with the other players in such good form.

Gabriel Jesus came off the bench again and looked more spritely than Viktor Gyokeres and now Arteta has a big decision to make for Thursday's visit of the Reds.

BOURNEMOUTH (4-2-3-1): Petrovic; Jimenez, Hill, Senesi, Truffert; Tavernier, Scott (Kroupi 74); Brooks (Adil 67), Kluivert (Cook 74), Semenyo; Evanilson (Unai 74).

ARSENAL (4-3-3): Raya; Timber, Saliba, Gabriel, Hincapie; Odegaard (Merino 80), Zubimendi, Rice; Madueke (Saka 67), Gyokeres (Jesus 66), Martinelli (Trossard 67).

QUICK WORK Gabriel slams the Gunners level just six minutes after his error

CHIRPY ROBINS ON QUALITY STREET

NORWICH 0

STOKE 2

Championship

MARK ROBINS paid tribute to his sickness-hit squad as Stoke kept up their promotion push.

Back-to-back away wins leave the Potters a point outside the top six as late goals from Sam Gallagher (right) and Sorba Thomas sealed a deserved victory.

Former Norwich forward Robins said: "This fourth game in such a short period of time was incredibly tough. We have a squad of 20 outfield players with five out injured and one on international duty.

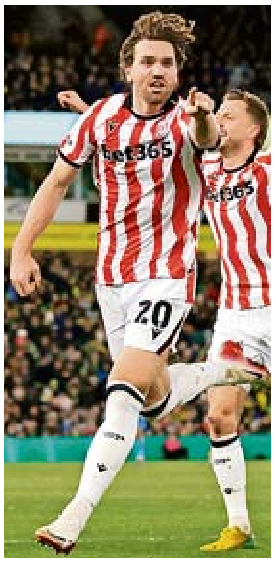
"But on the back of the four games a lot of players played a lot of minutes and showed incredible courage to take the ball, work incredibly hard and show plenty of quality.

"The two goals were the epitome of that quality – we were good value for the win and the bits of quality in it were worth the admission fee." Norwich missed a chance to climb out of the bottom three as they slid to a second defeat in three.

Canaries boss Philippe Clement admitted: "I expected more.

"I had the feeling at half-time we could grab the game and make the difference but we didn't realise that on the pitch. The changes we made didn't raise our level but Stoke's did."

Clement also revealed Norwich are on the verge of landing Vancouver Whitecaps winger Ali Ahmed.



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IRONS IN THE MIRE

Dejected West Ham stars Oliver Scarles and Jarrod Bowen face a fight for survival

ON THE SPOT

Hwang Hee-chan's penalty put the home side 2-0 in front

WAIT IS LIFTED OFF ROB

BY **KEITH WEBSTER**

IT had been a long 20-game wait for Wolves fans to finally celebrate a Premier League win this season.

But despite being 3-0 ahead by half-time, manager Rob Edwards waited until stoppage time before believing it was going to happen.

Maybe that was because his side were on the verge of their first win but also because they had conceded in all 19 previous league games. A first clean sheet was as welcome as the victory.

"It was nice to get that," said Edwards (right). "Being three goals to the good with 30 seconds to go I started enjoying it a little bit. Then I was thinking to tick another thing off and get a clean sheet as well. That was good. I felt we deserved it.

"Any time the ball came in the box, I thought [keeper Jose] Sa was brilliant. We got blocks and headers in when we needed. There wasn't too many heart-in-mouth moments.

"We managed to keep the game, when we didn't have the ball, in front of us, and didn't really allow many spaces to get in behind. In those transitional moments, [Jarrod] Bowen is such a threat, but we didn't allow that. We were pretty solid and deserved a clean sheet."

THE WOLVES ARE AT THE DOOR

Hammers hit rock bottom with Molineux hammering and captain Bowen admits Forest relegation clash is now 'massive'

WOLVES	**3**
WEST HAM	**0**

BY **KEITH WEBSTER**

FOR West Ham, crunch relegation games are like London buses right now.

Having played top-half sides Manchester United, Brighton, Aston Villa and Manchester City in December, they started the year with a trip to rock-bottom Wolves.

And having lost that at a canter, their meeting with Nottingham Forest, a team four points and one place above them, makes tomorrow night's clash their biggest game of the season.

Hopes of ending an eight-game winless run were demolished in a first-half nightmare on Saturday as Jhon Arias struck early at Molineux, before Hwang Hee-chan's penalty and a Mateus Mane goal wrapped things up by the interval.

West Ham were better in the second half – as if they could have been any worse – but captain Jarrod Bowen cut a desperately disappointed figure when he sized up the afternoon's events in the Midlands, not to mention the battle that lies ahead for the Hammers.

"It's been a very, very tough day," said Bowen. "Coming into the game, we knew we were going up against a team who have improved over recent weeks, and have performed well at Liverpool and Manchester United.

"I've been here for a few years now, and it's important to stay in games. You have games when you're not playing so well, but if you stay in the game you're hard to beat, and then you can go on and get chances to win the game.

"But the goals we conceded were really poor, and then they played a back five that we found really difficult to break down.

"We want to play well and win games, but we have to have the kind of mentality of being in a scrap as well, and that over our dead bodies is that ball going in the back of the net.

"We can't afford to be conceding two or three goals, and we need to be better."

And so to that tantalising clash at the London Stadium tomorrow night against Forest, a game that has taken on huge significance for both sides

Bowen added: "We have to understand the situation we're in, and we do. We're 18th in the Premier League, we're four points from safety and if the league ended today, we'd go down.

"We can't get caught up in the narrative of us having a lot of the season left, because we're not showing it. We have to show it out on the pitch, and we know we need to start changing things fast.

"The responsibility falls on me as captain, and I'm not going to shy away from the challenge. The fans turn up week after week, home and away, and now it's up to us.

"As much as anyone, I want to bring the good times back to this club. My job now is to rally the team as much as possible ahead of Tuesday, which is going to be a massive game.

"We have to be better than what we've been, and we'll do everything we can to make sure we are."

WOLVES (3-5-2): Sa; Mosquera, S Bueno, Krejci; Tchatchoua, Arias, Gomes (Anred 46), Mane, H Bueno; Arokodare, Hwang (Strand Larsen 61)
WEST HAM (4-2-3-1): Areola; Scarles, Kilman, Mavropanos, Walker-Peters; Potts (Soucek 46), Magassa (Mayers 46); Bowen, Fernandes, Summerville; Wilson

MAT GLOSS
Mane leads the celebrations after netting third goal

PREMIER LEAGUE

WOLVES		WEST HAM
33%	POSSESSION	67%
8	SHOTS ON TARGET	0
3	SHOTS OFF TARGET	6
301	TOTAL PASSES	624
78%	PASSING SUCCESS	88%
6	CORNERS	7
1	OFFSIDE	1
11	FOULS	10
0 🟥 1 🟨	CARDS	🟨 0 🟥 0

REF: Peter Bankes **ATT:** 29,874

MAN OF THE MATCH
MATEUS MANE

LIONS HAVE A LATE STING IN THE TAYL FOR SWANS

MILLWALL	**2**
SWANSEA	**1**

Championship

ALEX NEIL insisted Millwall were good value for their victory as they left it late to clip the Swans' wings.

The Lions climbed back into the top six thanks to Caleb Taylor's stoppage-time header sealing only a second victory in seven matches to leave Neil's troops just three points off the top two.

Millwall are up to fifth and a delighted Neil said: "There's nothing better than a late winner.

"We deserved it in terms of the chances in the game. In the first half we were excellent and should have been two or three up – their goalkeeper made some unbelievable saves.

"We didn't start the second half well – they just put the ball down the left channel and we didn't deal with it well enough and the goal was really disappointing.

"When the game got to about 70 minutes we started to wrestle back control and their goalkeeper made another couple of great saves."

Millwall led at the break thanks to Mihailo Ivanovic's smart turn and finish to reward their first-half dominance as keeper Lawrence Vigouroux kept Swansea in it.

The Welshmen levelled early in the second half when captain Ben Cabango prodded home from close range.

Both sides looked to have settled for a point until centre-back Taylor climbed above Marko Stamenic at the far post to head home from Alfie Doughty's cross.

Swansea slip to 17th after a fifth defeat in six matches on the road. Vitor Matos's men are eight points clear of danger and the Portuguese head coach said: "Our keeper was absolutely fantastic but we couldn't get him at least a point that he deserved.

"We dropped too deep at times to give Millwall the opportunity to create chances at the end of what's not been an easy period with the amount of games we've played."

ISMAEL'S JOY AS BARADJI BRINGS IT

BLACKBURN 2

CHARLTON 2

Championship

VALERIEN ISMAEL hailed Moussa Baradji as a "special player" after the midfielder's brace helped Blackburn rescue a point.

The Frenchman was injured when he joined on loan from Swiss side Yverdon-Sport in the summer.

But he is now showing fans his true worth.

He put in a man-of-the-match display to drag Rovers level after Charlie Kelman's quickfire first-half brace - a close-range volley and a penalty - threatened to condemn Rovers to successive defeats.

Baradji headed his first Blackburn goal just before the break and completed the comeback 13 minutes from time, timing his run to perfection to convert Lewis Miller's cross.

Rovers are without a win in five matches but boss Ismael was full of praise for Baradji.

He said: "We knew that we've got a special player with him. That's why we took the risk in the summer because we know that he's worth it.

"We're just pleased that he was able, since he came back, to have 100 per cent ability in training sessions and in games.

"He gave us exactly what we expected from him with his physicality, his capability to play box to box and ability to score goals.

"We showed a great mentality to come back into the game and it's a good point in the end."

Rovers are 20th - a place below Charlton, who are also without a win in four.

Nathan Jones' men halted a two-match away losing run, but the Welshman admitted: "It wasn't a good game.

"No team had any control, but after taking a two-goal lead we expect to win.

"The goal just before half-time lifted them and that's poor from us to turn the ball over.

"Then the second goal is really frustrating as it's the kind of thing we normally defend really well so I'm really disappointed."

McGINN AND IN
Villa double star John McGinn puts one away in a victory over Forest

PREMIER LEAGUE

ASTON VILLA		N FOREST
73%	POSSESSION	27%
4	SHOTS ON TARGET	5
3	SHOTS OFF TARGET	3
645	TOTAL PASSES	239
90%	PASSING SUCCESS	71%
4	CORNERS	4
1	OFFSIDE	4
10	FOULS	20
🟥 0 🟨 1	CARDS	🟨 2 🟥 0

REF: Simon Hooper ATT: 43,039

MAN OF THE MATCH
JOHN McGINN

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

Dyche wants 'truth not noise' but admits Forest face tough battle

ASTON VILLA 3

N FOREST 1

BY **SARAH CLAPSON**

AS he picked the bones out of a fourth straight defeat for Nottingham Forest, Sean Dyche was keen to set out a few "truths".

With West Ham next up night – a team in the drop zone just four points and one place below Forest – now is a good time for truths, not to mention reality.

Asked about his team's "worrying" position in the Premier League table, Dyche pointed to how Forest had climbed out of the relegation zone on his watch and how their goalscoring stats had improved.

"What changes the story is when you put a run together like we have," Dyche said.

"Before today, in the last six games, Sunderland – who are having a great season – had got seven points and we had got six. That's the reality. I have to look at the reality, not all the noise. Noise is for other people to speak about. I always remind the players of the truth in every story. And that's our truth."

The problem for Dyche and Forest is the truth also points to them being in the thick of a scrap for survival.

And the reality is performances in three out of their last four games – against Manchester City aside – have been poor.

Unless both factors change quickly, the noise the 54-year-old refers to will only grow louder.

Not only did Forest lack ambition at Villa Park, Dyche lamented a string of "very basic errors".

If his team are to steer clear of danger, they cannot afford such moments of sloppiness. Keeper John Victor's rush of blood to allow John McGinn to seal the win was not the only one.

Nikola Milenkovic did not get tight enough to Ollie Watkins for the opener and Dilane Bakwa was punished for losing possession in the build-up to McGinn's first and Villa's second.

Morgan Gibbs-White had given Forest hope before Victor's mistake for the clincher.

"It's just a bit of naivety at times, I think," Dyche said.

"That mixture of naivety and making an error is not a place to be in the Premier League.

"We haven't got away with much. The team has been punished when we have made mistakes, but on another day you don't get punished as badly as we did today by a very good side."

Lapses of concentration have crept in of late.

Errors against West Ham tomorrow night cannot be allowed.

ASTON VILLA: Martinez; Cash (Garcia 90), Konsa, Lindelof, Maatsen (Digne 69); Kamara, Tielemans; McGinn (Bogarde 83), Buendia (Sancho 69), Rogers; Watkins (Malen 83).

NOTTM FOREST: Victor (Selz 78); Aina (Savona 69), Milenkovic, Murillo, Williams; Anderson, Dominguez (Luiz 84); Hutchinson, Gibbs-White, Bakwa (McAtee 69); Jesus (Kalimuendo 84).

SKIPPER HAILS UNDER-RATED SUPER BOUBA

BY **JOHN TOWNLEY**

ASTON VILLA captain John McGinn has labelled Boubacar Kamara one of the most underrated players in Europe.

The midfielder joined Villa on a free transfer from Marseille in 2022 but despite excellent performances, has only featured twice for the France national team.

"I look at the France squad getting announced every time and the fact he doesn't get near it is crazy," McGinn said. "It speaks about their quality, but we are fortunate to have one of the most underrated players in Europe. Bouba is not only brilliant off the ball, but what a footballer he is."

STAY FOCUSED
Dyche knows sloppy errors cannot be allowed at Forest

CHEER WE GO
Brighton's returning star Gross got the biggest cheer of day

PASCAL GLOSS

Fan favourite's return adds to feelgood factor as Seagulls record a first win in seven

BRIGHTON 2
BURNLEY 0

BY **PAUL BROWN**

RETURNING hero Pascal Gross will not need long to get back up to speed at Brighton.

Gross knows half the team already from his first spell at the club and claims he has watched every one of their games since he left.

The Brighton fan favourite rejoined the club on last week after leaving last summer to sign for boyhood club Borussia Dortmund.

It was goals from Georginio Rutter and Yasin Ayari against Burnley which gave the Seagulls their first win in seven.

But the biggest cheer of the day was reserved for Gross when he came on as a 71st-minute sub.

The 34-year-old said: "I watched nearly every game since I left so I followed the club a lot. I know the players quite well and you get to know them better when you train with them.

"I love the life here. This morning before the game I walked at the beach, had a coffee and really enjoyed it.

"Was it always the plan to come back? It was. Sometimes when you're away from a club for a while the feelings get less and less.

"But the relationships, the connection, they never did. I didn't know what to expect but the reception from the fans was amazing. I hope I can give them something back with my performances."

Gross spent seven seasons at Brighton during his first spell, making 261 appearances before signing for Dortmund for £8million.

Now he's back, the former Germany international knows he'll have a different role but he's no less excited about what he can give Fabian Hurzeler's side.

Gross said: "I'm really fit. I played a lot of games for Dortmund at a high level, Champions League and in the Bundesliga.

"There's a lot of potential here. If we can get the balance right between experience and some young players we can hurt a lot of teams. If we can be aggressive, active, and ruthless, we can be really good."

Brighton certainly made Burnley feel uncomfortable, outshooting them 15 to 5 and dominating.

This win also lifted them to within touching distance of a top-four spot.

But while this has been an up and down season for Brighton, Gross reckons the sky's the limit. And he revealed that his return has been on the cards for a long time.

"Everybody had to work to get it done. It wasn't easy to make it happen," he said.

"I gave the signal since quite a bit that I could imagine that happening, and I think then it's all about negotiations.

"It wasn't easy, but in the end, it happened. The first time I had a feeling it can happen was on the 31st.

"I knew there was a chance, but you never know if in football, if it's realistic or if it makes sense."

BRIGHTON: Verbruggen; Veltman, Van Hecke, Dunk, Kadioglu; Ayari, Gruda (Watson 87); Gomez (Milner 80), Rutter (Gross 70), Mitoma (De Cuyper 70); Kostoulas (Welbeck 70).
BURNLEY: Dubravka; Walker, Laurent, Ekdal, Humphreys, Pires; Larsen (Edwards 55), Ugochukwu (Sonne 56), Florentino, Anthony (Banel 81); Broja (Tchaouna 64).

PREMIER LEAGUE

BRIGHTON		BURNLEY
60%	POSSESSION	40%
4	SHOTS ON TARGET	3
7	SHOTS OFF TARGET	2
608	TOTAL PASSES	396
90%	PASSING SUCCESS	82%
4	CORNERS	4
0	OFFSIDE	0
7	FOULS	17
0 🟥 0 🟨	CARDS	4 🟨 0 🟥

REF: Tim Robinson **ATT:** 31,373

MAN OF THE MATCH
JAN PAUL VAN HECKE

GULL CRAZY
Brighton's goals came from Rutter (above) and Ayari (below)

PARKER'S STILL SCOTT BELIEF

BY **PAUL BROWN**

SCOTT PARKER says Manchester United cannot come quickly enough for Burnley, who are winless in 11 games.

Parker's future as Clarets boss was plunged into doubt after a dismal 2-0 defeat at Brighton.

But the former England midfielder claims United could be just what the doctor ordered – and wishes he could be playing them even sooner. Parker said: "Massive game now on Wednesday. That was always going to be pencilled in as a massive game. Even more so for us now.

"We need a massive reaction going into Wednesday. But I would play now if I could.

"We need to dig deeply now and we need a reaction. We need to play with absolute belief on Wednesday night."

SCOTTISH RD-UP

McCOWAN: IT HAS NEVER BEEN SO BAD

BY **JASON MELLOR**

LUKE McCOWAN admitted CELTIC have hit rock-bottom after the 3-1 derby defeat by RANGERS piled more pressure on Wilfried Nancy.

French boss Nancy (top) has two wins out of eight with 18 goals conceded as the SPL Champions sit six points behind leaders HEARTS, above their Old Firm rivals on goal difference.

Midfielder McCowan said: "When has it ever been this bad? It never has. You're asking fans to react to something for the first time they're seeing it, and us as players for the first time we're feeling it.

"It's not nice. I'll tell you that from a player's perspective. It doesn't leave you. It haunts you every minute of every day."

Connor Barron (below) believes Rangers showed their character to battle back from a goal down to beat their rivals at Parkhead. The 23-year-old midfielder said: "The belief was there from the start."

Derek McInnes was impressed with Jordi Altena after the Dutch right-back made an eye-catching debut in Hearts' 1-0 victory over Livingston – who are four points adrift at the bottom after 19 games without a win.

The 22-year-old joined the Jambos last week from Eerste Divisie side Waalwijk and was pitched straight into the starting line-up as the leaders stretched their advantage at the top.

Boss McInnes said: "Jordi's only had a few days with us and he did well."

Aberdeen have sacked manager Jimmy Thelin after Saturday's defeat to Falkirk extended their winless run to five games.

LEAGUE ONE ROUND-UP

BLUEBIRDS STILL AT TOP OF THE TREE

CARDIFF captain Calum Chambers was on target as the League One leaders edged out WIGAN 1-0.

Chambers (above) smashed home a rocket to maintain their three-point gap at the top.

Despite victory, Bluebirds head coach Brian Barry-Murphy urged his side to be more ruthless.

"I would have liked us to score more goals to make it more comfortable near the end and get the supporters more of what they wanted," Barry-Murphy said.

"The biggest thing for us is to understand how we're creating chances, keep doing it, do more of it, then we have goals throughout our team."

Promotion-chasing LINCOLN came from behind to thrash PETERBOROUGH 5-2.

Reeco Hackett cancelled out Harry Leonard's opener before Freddie Draper and Tendayi Darikwa added two more before half-time.

Kyrell Lisbie gave Posh hope before Adam Reach and Darikwa wrapped up the victory.

"We didn't start very well and looked a bit leggy," said Lincoln head coach Michael Skubala.

"Once we tidied up our structure and got on top of our pressing we were too much for them."

Will Swan's strike gave BRADFORD a 2-1 win at BLACKPOOL after Ashley Fletcher cancelled out Aden Baldwin's opening goal.

Former BOLTON favourite Kevin Nolan returned to his former club to secure NORTHAMPTON'S second successive 0-0 draw.

Jayden Wareham's 89th-minute equaliser secured a 2-2 draw for EXETER at HUDDERSFIELD, and Brendan Galloway, Mathias Ross and a Lorent Tolaj penalty fired PLYMOUTH to a 3-0 win at home to BURTON.

Junior Quitirna and Niall Huggins scored for WYCOMBE in a 2-0 win over AFC WIMBLEDON, while Lewis Wing struck in the 89th minute to give READING a 1-0 victory against STOCKPORT.

DONCASTER'S home match against LUTON, ROTHERHAM'S clash with MANSFIELD and STEVENAGE'S match against LEYTON ORIENT were all postponed due to the weather.

YAH BOO DUCKS TO YOU

Fed-up Frank's ref rap as Marvin rubs it in to flagging Sky Blues

MAR-VELLOUS Marvin Ducksch celebrates after scoring Brum opener

BIRMINGHAM	3
COVENTRY	2

CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH STATS

BIRMINGHAM		COVENTRY
25%	POSSESSION	75%
4	SHOTS ON TARGET	6
2	SHOTS OFF TARGET	9
2	CORNERS	6
4	OFFSIDE	2
13	FOULS	9
0 🟥 3 🟨	CARDS	🟨 1 🟥 1

REF: James Linington ATT: 27,932

FRUSTRATED Frank Lampard insists Coventry are paying the penalty for dodgy refereeing decisions as the Sky Blues' mid-season blip threatens to become a full-blown crisis.

It's just one win in five for the Championship leaders, who twice came from behind before being sunk by Marvin Ducksch's second goal of the game with 25 minutes left.

Lampard was furious his side weren't given a late penalty after Tomoki Iwata's rugby tackle on Ephron Mason-Clark.

The Sky Blues have had just one awarded all season, and boss Lampard said: "We should have had a penalty at the end.

"We had two absolute penalties not given against Ipswich, we had one against Southampton not given, one against Charlton at home that wasn't given and we got an apology for that.

"It's again and again. It's as clear as day and there are so many penalties we're not getting. We've had one penalty this season and we're the team with the most box entries.

"There's no point in asking questions any more."

Lampard was equally frustrated with a below-par display from his side, who are set to be without Bobby Thomas for three games after the defender saw red in stoppage time for hitting out at Birmingham centre-back Phil Neumann.

Josh Eccles and Ellis Simms levelled at the start of each half, but it's five without a win on the road and Lampard (above) added: "The game was there for the taking. We made too many defensive mistakes and giving three goals away, you're going to struggle to win."

ON THE PULL Ephron Mason-Clark (below, right) is hauled down by Tomoki Iwata

Brum boss Chris Davies hit back at his critics after Liverpool loan winger Lewis Koumas opened his Blues account in between German striker Duksch finding the net in each half.

The St Andrew's boss has been under fire from fans and hasn't been helped by the club's owners insisting they expect to be in the Premier League next season as the Blues struggle to reproduce the stunning form of their League One title-winning campaign.

Davies said: "It's all about the players. They showed determination and spirit and plenty of quality to win the game.

"We were in League One last year and people should take a second to remember that.

"The players have been put under a lot of pressure and expectation coming out of League One – more than any team ever has – and it's not always helpful.

"No one gave us a chance today, everyone thought Coventry were going to stroll in and beat us, but the players showed big character and personality."

German defender Kai Wagner stood out on his Blues debut, setting up the opener for Ducksch.

Wagner said: "I joked before the game with Marvin. I told him to be in the right place and I'd give him the ball and he came up with a great finish."

LEAGUE TWO ROUND-UP

LATE DRAMA ALL TWO MUCH FOR DONS BOSS

PAUL WARNE was disappointed with the "two points dropped" after MK DONS conceded a stoppage-time equaliser to draw 2-2 with CHESTERFIELD.

In one of only two games to go ahead amid the big freeze, MK Dons lead 2-0 at half-time.

Callum Paterson scored in the 29th minute as he turned in Aaron Nemane's cross before Rushian Hepburn-Murphy's long-range strike double their advantage in the 44th minute.

Sam Curtis pulled a goal back with a 67th-minute header from Liam Mandeville's free-kick.

Further drama happened when, in stoppage time, former Dons striker Will Grigg headed in Mandeville's corner.

MK Dons missed out on moving up to third place, with Warne saying: "I did feel like it was two points dropped today.

"Games are judged by goals and we've conceded two late goals, both of which are stoppable, and it feels like a wasted opportunity."

Chesterfield first-team coach Gary Roberts said: "I thought we pushed on and handled the game really well."

Steve Cotterill (left) praised Hakeeb Adelakun's impact for CHELTENHAM after he signed off with the opening goal in a 3-0 home win over CRAWLEY.

Adelakun made it three goals in his last five appearances as he played in the final game of his short-term deal. His 62nd-minute opener was added to by Jordan Thomas and Robbie Cundy.

"I said when Haks came here that he might end up having a short period of time with us, get us a few goals and a few points and he's done it," said Cheltenham boss Cotterill.

Crawley chief Scott Lindsey said: "The players couldn't wait to get out for the second half. Then they perform like that, which was an absolute embarrassment."

LEAGUE ONE

BLACKPOOL (0) 1 — **BRADFORD** (1) 2
Fletcher 56 — Baldwin 25, Swan 67
ATT: 10,894

Blackpool: Peacock-Farrell, Lyons, Casey, Ashworth, Morgan, Imray, Bowler (Brown 66), Honeyman, Banks (Hamilton 66), Bloxham, Fletcher. **Subs not used:** Ravizzoli, Evans, Upton, Bondo, Nwankwo.
Bradford: Walker, Baldwin, Tilt, Touray, Neufville, Power, Metcalfe, T Wright, Sarcevic (Leigh 71), Kavanagh (Sibley 62), Swan (Humphrys 77). **Subs not used:** Hilton, Halliday, J Wright, McIntyre. **Booked:** Swan 45, Leigh 90.
Ref: Simon Mather.

BOLTON (0) 0 — **NORTHAMPTON** (0) 0
ATT: 20,333

Bolton: Miller, Christie (Osei-Tutu 76), Toal, Johnston, Taylor (Conway 58), Sheehan, Erhahon (Randall 58), Cozier-Duberry, Dempsey, Cissoko (Gale 67), Burstow (Dalby 76). **Subs not used:** Sharman-Lowe, Simons.
Northampton: Fitzsimons, Dyche (Willis 65), Guthrie, Perkins (Swyer 80), Wormleighton, Taylor, Campbell, Guinness-Walker, List (Eaves 56), Vale (Edwards 56), Hoskins. **Subs not used:** Burge, Burroughs, Jacobs.
Ref: Alex Chilowicz.

CARDIFF (1) 1 — **WIGAN** (0) 0
Chambers 24
ATT: 18,174

Cardiff: Trott, Ng, Lawlor (Fish 84), Chambers, Bagan, Wintle, Robertson, Ashford (Tanner 73), Kellyman (Robinson 72), Willock, Salech. **Subs not used:** Kpakio, Colwill, Turnbull, Davies.
Wigan: Tickle, Carragher, Aimson, Fox, Weir (McManaman 90), Brenan (Asamoah 46), Francois, Borges Rodrigues, Murray, Wright (Bettoni 90), Costelloe (Saydee 82). **Subs not used:** Savin, Sessegnon, Hungbo.
Ref: Will Finnie.

DONCASTER P — **LUTON** P

HUDDERSFIELD (2) 2 — **EXETER** (1) 2
Harness 18 — Cole 20
Radulovic 43 — Wareham 89
ATT: 16,071

Huddersfield: Nicholls, Balker, Wallace, Roughan (Feeney 46), Ashia, Harness (Ledson 86), Kasumu, Castledine (Wiles 60), Gooch (Sorensen 74), May, Radulovic (Charles 74). **Subs not used:** Goodman, Alves. **Booked:** May 85.
Exeter: Whitworth, Turns (Sweeney 46), Fitzwater, Woodhouse, Niskanen, McMillan, Brierley (Doyle-Hayes 59), Oakes (Aitchison 70), Cole (Cox 81), Wareham, Higgins (Mendes Gomes 59). **Subs not used:** Bycroft, Francis. **Booked:** Wareham 90.**Ref:** Abigail Byrne.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cardiff	24	16	3	5	42	24	51
Lincoln City	25	14	6	5	40	26	48
Bradford	24	13	7	4	34	25	46
Huddersfield	25	11	6	8	45	34	39
Bolton	24	10	9	5	31	22	39
Stockport Cty	24	11	6	7	33	30	39
Stevenage	22	10	7	5	26	18	37
Luton	24	10	5	9	33	29	35
Reading	24	9	8	7	32	28	35
Wycombe	25	8	9	8	32	28	33
Mansfield	23	9	5	9	31	28	32
Peterborough	24	10	2	12	30	33	32
AFC Wimbledon	24	9	4	11	27	33	31
Exeter	24	9	3	12	25	23	30
Wigan	24	7	9	8	26	27	30
Plymouth	25	9	3	13	32	39	30
Barnsley	21	8	5	8	33	33	29
Blackpool	25	8	5	12	31	37	29
Northampton	24	8	5	11	22	28	29
Leyton Orient	24	8	4	12	35	41	28
Burton Albion	24	7	6	11	23	34	27
Rotherham	24	6	6	12	22	35	24
Doncaster	24	6	5	13	24	41	23
Port Vale	23	4	6	13	18	31	18

LINCOLN CITY (3) 5 — **PETERBOROUGH** (1) 2
Hackett 33, Draper 45 — Leonard 24
Darikwa 45, 90, Reach 57 — Lisbie 56

Lincoln City: Wickens, Hamer, Bradley, Towler, Darikwa, McGrandles, Varfolomeyev (Jefferies 65), Reach (Ring 79), Hackett, Street (Moylan 86), Draper (Obikwu 65). **Subs not used:** Jeacock, Montsma, Okoronkwo. **Booked:** Towler 70, Obikwu 87.
Peterborough: Bass, Kioso, Lees, O'Connor, Johnston, Collins, Khela (Hayes 74), Frith (Aderoju 60), Garbett (O'Brien-Brady 74), Lisbie, Leonard. **Subs not used:** Bilokapic, Nevett, Lindgren, Dornelly. **Booked:** Collins 37, Lisbie 61, Leonard 83.
Ref: Charles Breakspear.

PLYMOUTH (1) 3 — **BURTON ALBION** (0) 0
Galloway 21
Ross Jensen 63
Tolaj 77 (pen)

Plymouth: Hazard, Edwards, Pleguezuelo (Ross Jensen 60), Mitchell (Finn 83), Galloway, Amaechi (Sorinola 72), Boateng, Ralls (Wiredu 73), Mumba, Tolaj, Pepple (Watts 60). **Subs not used:** Ashby-Hammond, Paterson. **Booked:** Tolaj 66, Mumba 67.
Burton Albion: Collins, Lofthouse, Sibbick, Vancooten, Hartridge (Akoto 29), Armer, Larsson (Taroni 90), Chauke, Evans (Newall 90), Williams (Krubally 90), Tavares (Scutt 90). **Subs not used:** Dudek, Williamson. **Booked:** Lofthouse 79, Tavares 79.
Ref: Ollie Yates.

PORT VALE P — **BARNSLEY** P

READING (0) 1 — **STOCKPORT COUNTY** (0) 0
Wing 89
ATT: 11,703

Reading: Pereira, Yiadom, Burns, O'Connor, Dorsett, Wing, Savage, Ritchie (Williams 63), Doyle (Fraser 63), Kyerewaa, Marriott (Ehibhatiomhan 77). **Subs not used:** Stevens, Stickland, Camara, Ahmed. **Booked:** O'Connor 65.
Stockport County: Hinchliffe, Hunt, Hills, Pye, Edun, Norwood, Osborn, Fevrier (Bailey 86), Mothersille (Andresson 77), Diamond, Wootton. **Subs not used:** Wogan, Olowu, Edwards, Gardner, Astles.
Ref: Jacob Miles.

ROTHERHAM P — **MANSFIELD** P

STEVENAGE P — **LEYTON ORIENT** P

WYCOMBE (1) 2 — **AFC WIMBLEDON** (0) 0
Quitirna 12
Huggins 67
ATT: 5,856

Wycombe: Norris, Casey, Hagelskjaer, Allen, Quitirna (Huggins 61), Leahy (Taylor 66), Boyd-Munce, Harvie, Mullins, Woodrow (McNeilly 76), Onyedinma (Fink 76). **Subs not used:** van Sas, Tilley, Lowry. **Booked:** Harvie 31, Huggins 90.
AFC Wimbledon: Bishop, Ogundere, Bauer (Asiimwe 65), Johnson, Seddon, Reeves, Smith, Maycock (Hackford 65), Hippolyte (Nkeng 65), Browne (Orsi-Dadomo 80), Stevens (Bugiel 65). **Subs not used:** McDonnell, Harbottle. **Booked:** Hippolyte 14, Browne 73.
Ref: Thomas Parsons.

BOURNEMOUTH (1) 2 — **ARSENAL** (1) 3
Evanilson 10 — Gabriel 16
Junior Kroupi 76 — Rice 54, 71
ATT: 11,240

ASTON VILLA (1) 3 — **NOTTM FOREST** (0) 1
Watkins 45 — Gibbs-White 61
McGinn 49, 73
ATT: 43,039

BRIGHTON (1) 2 — **BURNLEY** (0) 0
Rutter 29
Ayari 47
ATT: 31,373

WOLVES (3) 3 — **WEST HAM** (0) 0
Arias 4
Hwang 31 (pen)
Mane 41
ATT: 29,874

EVERTON (0) 2 — **BRENTFORD** (1) 4
Beto 66 — Thiago 11, 51, 88
Barry 90 — Collins 50

FULHAM (1) 2 — **LIVERPOOL** (0) 2
Wilson 17 — Wirtz 57
Reed 90 — Gakpo 90
ATT: 27,547

LEEDS (0) 1 — **MAN UTD** (0) 1
Aaronson 62 — Cunha 65
ATT: 36,909

MAN CITY (1) 1 — **CHELSEA** (0) 1
Reijnders 42 — Fernandez 90 (left)

NEWCASTLE (0) 2 — **CRYSTAL PALACE** (0) 0
Guimaraes 71,Thiaw 78
ATT: 51,979

TOTTENHAM (1) 1 — **SUNDERLAND** (0) 1
Davies 30 — Brobbey 80
ATT: 60,877

PREMIER LEAGUE

		HOME						AWAY					
		P	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
1	Arsenal	20	9	1	0	26	5	6	2	2	14	9	48
2	Man City	20	8	1	1	26	7	5	2	3	18	11	42
3	Aston Villa	20	8	1	1	18	8	5	2	3	15	16	42
4	Liverpool	20	6	2	2	15	10	4	2	4	17	18	34
5	Chelsea	20	4	3	3	15	11	4	4	2	18	11	31
6	Man Utd	20	5	3	2	18	13	3	4	3	16	17	31
7	Brentford	20	6	3	1	20	10	3	0	7	12	18	30
8	Sunderland	20	5	5	0	16	8	2	4	4	5	11	30
9	Newcastle	20	6	2	2	18	12	2	3	5	10	12	29
10	Brighton	20	5	4	1	18	11	2	3	5	12	16	28
11	Fulham	20	5	2	3	17	12	3	2	5	11	17	28
12	Everton	20	4	2	4	13	14	4	2	4	9	10	28
13	Tottenham	20	2	3	5	12	12	5	3	2	16	12	27
14	Crystal Palace	20	2	5	3	10	12	5	1	4	12	11	27
15	Bournemouth	20	4	4	2	13	9	1	4	5	18	29	23
16	Leeds	20	4	4	2	18	13	1	3	6	8	20	22
17	Nottm Forest	20	3	1	6	12	17	2	2	6	7	16	18
18	West Ham	20	2	1	7	12	23	1	4	5	9	18	14
19	Burnley	20	2	2	6	8	13	1	1	8	12	26	12
20	Wolves	20	1	1	8	10	23	0	2	8	4	17	6

TOP SCORERS

PREMIER LEAGUE
Haaland (Man City)..........19
Thiago (Brentford)..........14
Semenyo (Bournemth).....9
Welbeck (Brighton) 8
Calvert-Lewin (Leeds)......8

CHAMPIONSHIP
Armstrong (Southamptn)..11
Thomas-Asante (Coventry) 10
Morris (Derby) 10
Gelhardt (Hull)....................10
Moore (Wrexham) 10

LEAGUE ONE
Keillor-Dunn (Barnsley) .. 11
Ballard (Leyton Orient) ... 11
Salech (Cardiff) 11
Fletcher (Blackpool)....... 10
Wootton (Stockport Co) . 10

LEAGUE TWO
Drinan (Swindon) 13
Cheek (Bromley) 12
Kanu (Walsall) 10
Dennis (Notts County).... 10
Cavegn (Bristol Rovers) ...9

SCOTTISH PREM
Shankland (Hearts).........10
Maswanhise (Motherwll) .9
Nygren (Celtic) 8
Braga (Hearts)......................8
McGrath (Hibernian).........7

CHAMPIONSHIP

BIRMINGHAM (2) 3 — **COVENTRY** (1) 2
Ducksch 6, 63 — Eccles 8, Simms 60
Koumas 17
ATT: 27,932

Birmingham: Beadle, Iwata, Neumann, Robinson, Wagner (Sampsted 71), Paik, Doyle, Roberts (Willumsson 72), Stansfield (Fujimoto 90), Koumas, Ducksch (Furuhashi 72). **Subs not used:** Allsop, Mazwi, Isichei, Wright. **Booked:** Ducksch 36, Wagner 51, Beadle 88. **Coventry:** Rushworth, van Ewijk, Thomas, Kitching, Dasilva, Grimes, Rudoni, Sakamoto (Wright 67), Eccles (Andrews 89), Mason-Clark, Simms. **Subs not used:** Wilson, Bidwell, Latibeaudiere, Woolfenden, Brau, Perry, Shepherd. **Booked:** Eccles 86. **Sent-off:** Thomas 90. **Ref:** James Linington.

BLACKBURN (1) 2 — **CHARLTON** (2) 2
Baradji 37, 77 — Kelman 28, 34 (pen)

Blackburn: Pears, Atcheson, McLoughlin, Pratt (O'Riordan 46), Miller, Gardner-Hickman (Henriksson 76), Tronstad, Pickering (De Neve 46), Cantwell, Baradji (Montgomery 82), Ohashi. **Subs not used:** Toth, Yuri Ribeiro, Doherty, Dlamini, Tyjon. **Booked:** O'Riordan 48. **Charlton:** Kaminski, Burke (Gillesphey 42), Jones, Bell, Coventry (Knibbs 78), Bree, Berry (Carey 60), Rankin-Costello (Docherty 60), Campbell, Leaburn (Olaofe 79), Kelman. **Subs not used:** Mannion, Gough, Apter, Fullah. **Booked:** Gillesphey 50, Coventry 61, Jones 87, Bree 90. **Ref:** David Webb.

BRISTOL CITY (0) 0 — **PRESTON** (1) 2
ATT: 22,409 — Dobbin 8, Devine 70

Bristol City: O'Leary, Vyner, Dickie, Atkinson (Pring 54), McCrorie (Hirakawa 90), Randell, Knight, Borges, Twine (Morsy 54), Mehmeti (Jakobsen 55), Armstrong (Bell 78). **Subs not used:** Lumley, Tanner, Roberts, Pecover. **Booked:** Knight 37.
Preston: Iversen, Offiah (Lindsay 78), Storey, Hughes, Potts (Valentin 46), Whiteman, Thompson (McCann 73), Lewis, Devine, Osmajic (Jebbison 67), Dobbin (Frokjaer-Jensen 67). **Subs not used:** Walton, Small, Keane, Smith. **Booked:** Storey 34, Thompson 69. **Ref:** Paul Tierney.

DERBY (1) 1 — **WREXHAM** (1) 2
Brereton Diaz 34 — Smith 25
ATT: 29,939 — James 48

Derby: Zetterstrom, Langas, Sanderson (Jackson 81), Clarke, Ward, Thompson (Travis 60), Clark, Elder (Blackett-Taylor 60), Brereton Diaz, Agyemang (Weimann 60), Brewster (Salvesen 60). **Subs not used:** O'Donnell, Forsyth, Batth, Adams. **Booked:** Sanderson 73. **Wrexham:** Okonkwo, Cleworth, Hyam, Doyle, James, Longman, Windass (Rathbone 66), Sheaf, Thomason (Cacace 90), Broadhead (O'Brien 75), Smith (Rodriguez 90). **Subs not used:** Burton, Coady, Scarr, Barnett, Dobson. **Booked:** Cleworth 30, James 69. **Ref:** Matthew Corlett.

HULL P — **WATFORD** P

MIDDLESBROUGH (0) 4 — **SOUTHAMPTON** (0) 0
Whittaker 54, 66
Silvera 61, Browne 76
ATT: 26,077

Middlesbrough: Brynn, Ayling, Malanda, Targett, Bangura (Browne 6), Hackney (Hamilton 90), Morris, Silvera, Whittaker (Nypan 90), Burgzorg (Gilbert 81), Conway. **Subs not used:** McLaughlin, Fry, Hansen, McCormick, Kante.
Southampton: Bazunu, Harwood-Bellis, Wood-Gordon, Quarshie (Stewart 85), Fellows (Jelert 74), Downes, Jander (Bragg 61), Manning (Welington 74), Azaz, Scienza, Armstrong (Archer 74). **Subs not used:** McCarthy, Stephens, Matsuki, Robinson. **Booked:** Manning 64, Bragg 68, Harwood-Bellis 68, Quarshie 81. **Ref:** Oliver Langford.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Coventry	26	15	7	4	57	29	52
Middlesbrough	26	13	7	6	37	26	46
Ipswich	25	12	8	5	42	24	44
Preston	26	11	10	5	36	25	43
Millwall	26	12	7	7	29	33	43
Watford	25	11	8	6	37	29	41
Hull	25	12	5	8	40	38	41
Stoke	26	12	4	10	32	23	40
Wrexham	26	10	10	6	38	32	40
Bristol City	26	11	6	9	38	29	39
QPR	26	11	5	10	38	39	38
Derby	26	9	8	9	35	35	35
Birmingham	26	9	7	10	35	36	34
Leicester	25	9	7	9	35	37	34
Southampton	26	8	9	9	38	38	33
Sheff Utd	25	10	2	13	36	38	32
Swansea	26	9	5	12	27	33	32
West Brom	25	9	4	12	28	33	31
Charlton	25	7	8	10	25	32	29
Blackburn	25	7	7	11	24	30	28
Portsmouth	24	6	7	11	21	35	25
Norwich	26	6	6	14	28	39	24
Oxford Utd	25	5	7	13	25	35	22
Sheff Wed	25	1	8	16	18	51	-7

MILLWALL (1) 2 — **SWANSEA** (0) 1
Ivanovic 38 — Cabango 47
Taylor 90
ATT: 14,242

Millwall: Crocombe, Crama, Taylor, Cooper, Sturge (Bryan 77), Mitchell, Neghli (Mazou-Sacko 77), Azeez (Doughty 85), Langstaff (Leonard 90), Ballo (Emakhu 77), Ivanovic. **Subs not used:** Benda, McNamara, Matthews, Bangura-Williams. **Booked:** Neghli 66, Sturge 72.
Swansea: Vigouroux, Galbraith, Cabango, Burgess, Samuels-Smith (Tymon 59), Fulton, Ronald (Inoussa 73), Goncalo Franco, Yalcouye (Widell 59), Eom (Stamenic 73), Vipotnik (Wales 88). **Subs not used:** Fisher, Casey, Cooper, Parker.
Ref: John Busby.

NORWICH (0) 0 — **STOKE** (0) 2
Gallagher 75
Thomas 82

Norwich: Kovacevic, Fisher (Stacey 89), McConville, Darling, Mahovo (Chrisene 60), McLean, Mattsson, Jurasek (Schwartau 60), Wright (Marcondes 68), Makama, Sargent (Kvistgaarden 89). **Subs not used:** Grimshaw, Medic, Springett, Ben Slimane. **Booked:** Fisher 85.
Stoke: Simkin, Talovierov, Phillips, Wilmot, Lawal, Rigo (Seko 61), Pearson (Nzonzi 90), Cisse (Manhoef 61), Bae, Thomas, Mubama (Gallagher 46). **Subs not used:** Bonham, Kelly, Fawunmi, Griffin, Dixon. **Booked:** Lawal 25, Pearson 72.
Ref: Farai Hallam.

PORTSMOUTH P — **IPSWICH** P

QPR (1) 3 — **SHEFF WED** (0) 0
Burrell 14
Kolli 81, 88
ATT: 16,327

QPR: Hamer, Mbengue, Dunne, Cook, Norrington-Davies (Morgan 87), Poku (Dembele 46), Madsen, Varane (Field 45), Saito, Burrell (Kolli 21), Kone (Hayden 87). **Subs not used:** Nardi, Bennie, Smyth, Vale.
Sheff Wed: Charles, Iorfa (Palmer 56), Otegbayo, McGhee, Fusire (Shipston 90), Thornton (Redmond 57), Bannan, Amass, Cadamarteri (Onukwuli 90), McNeill (Moses 89), Lowe. **Subs not used:** Stretch, Emery, Alao, Johnson.
Ref: Sam Allison.

SHEFF UTD P — **OXFORD UTD** P

WEEK AHEAD

(7.45 unless stated)

TODAY
Sky Bet Championship
Leicester v West Brom (8)
Africa Cup of Nations Rnd of 16
Egypt v Benin (4)
Nigeria v Mozambique (7)

TOMORROW
Africa Cup of Nations Rnd of 16
Algeria v Congo DR (4)
Ivory Coast v Burkina Faso (7)
Premier League
West Ham v Nottm Forest (8)
William Hill Scottish Prem
Livingston v St Mirren
Rangers v Aberdeen (8)
KDM Evolution Trophy Rnd of 16
Arbroath v East Fife
Ayr v Stranraer
Partick v Inverness CT
Queen's Park v Forfar
Raith v Queen of South
St Johnstone v Ross County
Stirling v Stenhousemuir
Airdrieonians v Montrose

WEDNESDAY
Premier League
Bournem'th v Tottenham (7.30)
Brentford v Sunderland (7.30)
Burnley v Man Utd (8.15)
Crystal P v Aston Villa (7.30)
Everton v Wolves (7.30)
Fulham v Chelsea (7.30)
Man City v Brighton (7.30)
Newcastle v Leeds (8.15)

THURSDAY
Premier League
Arsenal v Liverpool (8)

FRIDAY
The Emirates FA Cup 3rd Rnd
MK Dons v Oxford Utd (7.30)
P Vale v Fleetwood Tn (7.30)
Preston v Wigan (7.30)
Wrexham v Nottm Forest (7.30)
William Hill Scottish Ch'ship
Ross County v Partick
(3 unless stated)

SATURDAY
The Emirates FA Cup 3rd Rnd
Boreham Wood v Burton A
Bristol City v Watford (5.45)
Burnley v Millwall
Cambridge U v Birmingham (5.45)
Charlton v Chelsea (8)
Cheltenham v Leicester (12.15)
Doncaster v Southampton
Everton v Sunderland (12.15)
Fulham v Middlesbrough
Grimsby v W-S-Mare (5.45)
Ipswich v Blackpool
Macclesfield FC v Crystal P (12.15)
Man City v Exeter
Newcastle v Bournemouth
Salford City v Swindon
Sheff Wed v Brentford
Stoke v Coventry
Tottenham v Aston Villa (5.45)
Wolves v Shrewsbury (12.15)
Sky Bet League One
Bradford v Rotherham
Leyton Orient v Cardiff
Luton v Stevenage (12.30)
Peterborough v Bolton
Stockport C v Huddersfield (12.30)
Sky Bet League Two
Accrington v Barnet
Chesterfield v Colchester
Crewe v Harrogate Town
Oldham v Notts County
Tranmere v Bromley
Enterprise National League
Braintree Tn v Boston U (5.30)
Sutton Utd v York
The FA Trophy Fourth Round
Bath City v Southend
Chatham Town v Carlisle
Eastleigh v Southport
Ebbsfleet United v Forest G
FC Halifax v Anstey Nomads
Hereford FC v AFC Fylde
Hornchurch v AFC Telford
Kidderminster v Morecambe
Leatherhead v Horsham
Marine v Gloucester
Scunthorpe v Clitheroe
Tamworth v Rochdale
Walton & Hersham v Brackley
Wealdstone v Dag & Red
Yeovil v Alvechurch
William Hill Scottish Prem
Celtic v Dundee Utd
Hibernian v Motherwell
Livingston v Kilmarnock
St Mirren v Falkirk
William Hill Scottish Ch'ship
Ayr v Airdrieonians
Morton v Dunfermline
Queen's Park v St Johnstone
Raith v Arbroath
William Hill Scottish League 1
Alloa v Montrose
Cove Rangers v Inverness CT
Peterhead v Hamilton
Queen of South v Kelty Hearts
Stenhousemuir v East Fife
William Hill Scottish League 2
Annan Athletic v Elgin
Dumbarton v Clyde
East Kilbride v Spartans
Edinburgh City v Stirling
Forfar v Stranraer
Women's Super League
Arsenal v Man Utd (12.30)

SUNDAY
The Emirates FA Cup 3rd Rnd
Derby v Leeds (12)
Hull v Blackburn (2.30)
Man Utd v Brighton (4.30)
Norwich v Walsall (2.30)
Portsmouth v Arsenal (2)
Sheff Utd v Mansfield (2.30)
Swansea v West Brom (2.30)
West Ham v QPR (2.30)
William Hill Scottish Prem
Aberdeen v Rangers (4.30)
Dundee v Hearts (2)
Women's Super League
Aston Villa v Brighton (12)
Chelsea v West Ham (12)
Liverpool FC v London C (2.30)
Man City v Everton (12)
Tottenham v Leicester (12)
Women's Super League 2
Durham v Sunderland (12)
Ipswich v Charlton (2)
Newcastle v Birmingham C (2)
Nottm Forest v Bristol City (2)
Sheff Utd v Crystal Palace (1)

MONDAY
The Emirates FA Cup 3rd Rnd
Liverpool v Barnsley
Vertu Trophy Third Round
Wimbledon v West Ham U21 (7)

1-2-X CHECK

POOLS NUMBER	FULL TIME
1	1
2	1a
3	1
4	1a
5	3
6	3
7	3
8	1
9	3
10	1
11	1
12	3
13	1a
14	1a
15	1
16	1
17	1
18	1a
19	1a
20	1
21	1
22	1a
23	2
24	1
25	1a
26	3
27	1
28	1
29	1a
30	1
31	1
32	1
33	1
34	1a
35	1
36	1
37	1
38	1
39	3
40	1a
41	3
42	1a
43	1
44	1a
45	1a
46	1
47	1
48	1a
49	1

LEAGUE TWO

BARNET P — **CREWE** P

BARROW P — **BRISTOL ROVERS** P

BROMLEY P — **OLDHAM** P

CAMBRIDGE UTD P — **GRIMSBY** P

CHELTENHAM (0) 3 — **CRAWLEY TOWN** (0) 0
Adelakun 62
Thomas 69
Cundy 76
ATT: 3,211

Cheltenham: Day, Tomkinson, Cundy, Wilson, Stevenson, Jude-Boyd (Power 80), Young, Hutchinson (Kinsella 73), Thomas (Harmon 73), Bickerstaff (Taylor 81), Miller (Adelakun 56). **Subs not used:** Diallo, Martin. **Booked:** Power 90.
Crawley Town: Davies, Barker, Conroy, Flint, Williams, Forster, Richards (Roles 77), Brown (Pereira 77), Russell, Adeyemo (Tshimanga 77), McKirdy. **Subs not used:** Bajrami, Watson, Vassell, Odimayo. **Booked:** Russell 33, McKirdy 89.
Ref: Craig Hicks.

COLCHESTER P — **ACCRINGTON STANLEY** P

HARROGATE TOWN P — **SWINDON** P

MK DONS (2) 2 — **CHESTERFIELD** (0) 2
Paterson 29 — Curtis 67
Hepburn-Murphy 44 — Grigg 90
ATT: 7,019

MK Dons: MacGillivray, Jones, Sanders, Offord, Nemane, Crowley (Thompson-Sommers 70), Kelly, Lemonheigh-Evans, Mellish (Collins 76), Hepburn-Murphy (Hogan 71), Paterson. **Subs not used:** Trueman, Leko, Tripp, Burke. **Booked:** Nemane 26, Sanders 54, Mellish 58, Kelly 79.
Chesterfield: Hemming, Curtis (Daley-Campbell 76), Donacien (Naylor 31), Swinkels, Lewis (Duffy 46), Braybrooke, Stirk, Mandeville, Darcy (Ladapo 66), Berry-McNally, Bonis (Grigg 66). **Subs not used:** Boot, Fleck. **Booked:** Lewis 6, Grigg 90.
Ref: Andrew Miller.

NEWPORT COUNTY P — **TRANMERE** P

NOTTS COUNTY P — **GILLINGHAM** P

SALFORD CITY P — **SHREWSBURY** P

WALSALL P — **FLEETWOOD TOWN** P

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bromley	24	14	6	4	42	27	48
Swindon	24	14	4	6	39	26	46
Walsall	24	13	4	7	32	23	43
Salford City	24	13	4	7	35	31	43
MK Dons	25	11	8	6	46	28	41
Cambridge Utd	24	11	8	5	28	19	41
Chesterfield	25	10	10	5	42	35	40
Notts County	24	11	6	7	36	26	39
Colchester	24	9	9	6	38	28	36
Crewe	24	10	5	9	38	32	35
Barnet	24	9	8	7	32	26	35
Grimsby	24	9	7	8	35	30	34
Fleetwood Town	24	9	7	8	32	30	34
Accrington Stanley	24	9	6	9	27	26	33
Oldham	24	7	11	6	24	19	32
Gillingham	24	7	11	6	31	28	32
Tranmere	24	8	8	8	39	37	32
Cheltenham	25	9	3	13	25	41	30
Barrow	24	6	6	12	26	35	24
Bristol Rovers	24	6	3	15	21	44	21
Crawley Town	25	4	7	14	28	45	19
Shrewsbury	24	4	7	13	21	41	19
Newport County	24	4	5	15	24	43	17
Harrogate Town	24	4	5	15	18	39	17

NON-LEAGUE ROUND-UP

HUGHES SET FOR CHRIS BLISS

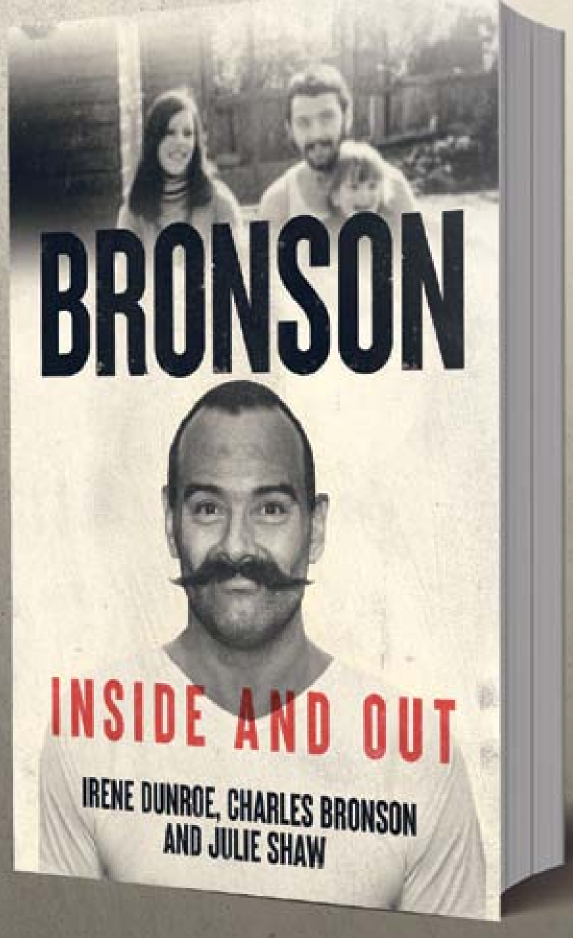
MARK HUGHES is confident of new arrivals this month to boost CARLISLE'S promotion push.

The Cumbrians returned to the top with a 2-0 victory over WEALDSTONE in one of the few National League games to beat the big freeze.

Hughes (right) is hopeful of making midfielder Chris Conn-Clarke's loan from Peterborough permanent in a busy January, and the Brunton Park boss said: "Possibly this week. There are conversations going on as you would imagine so we'll see but we're hopeful."

FOREST GREEN'S January business paid immediate dividends as Ricardo Rees scored both goals in a 2-1 victory over HALIFAX. After the former Merthyr Town striker's dream debut pushed his new side up to third, boss Robbie Savage insisted: "So far our number nines haven't been as ruthless and clinical as we'd have liked. Ricardo was one that jumped out to us and we've beaten off competition from clubs not too far away."

The return of former boss Rob Elliot for a second spell in charge couldn't prevent GATESHEAD from slumping to a 12th straight defeat, 3-1 at TAMWORTH, to leave them bottom, four points adrift of safety.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WHITT IS A HIT

Whittaker slots home to open the scoring on a fine day for the hosts

BORO ARE UP FOUR IT

Whittaker ends drought in style

MIDDLESBROUGH	4
SOUTHAMPTON	0

BY **JASON MELLOR**

TWO-GOAL Morgan Whittaker admitted his relief as Middlesbrough ended a seven-and-a-half hour goal drought to rekindle their top two hopes.

Boro climbed back up to second with a first win in five, cutting Coventry's lead to six points as they put the Saints to the sword with a sizzling four-goal second-half salvo.

Whitaker took his season's goal tally into double figures, with Sammy Silvera and Sunderland loanee Alan Browne also on the scoresheet.

The Boro forward said: "It's a massive win. It's not felt too different to the last four games, but we knew the results hadn't been there even though we've been creating a load of chances.

"We knew if we scored first, teams have to change against us so when we did it was a sense of relief and we knew we could go and get more goals. We've been putting one half together and not both but this was a full performance."

Southampton had the better of the first half chances but were denied again and again by the brilliant Adilson Malanda, who enjoyed an exceptional debut.

The Frenchman joined Boro from Charlotte FC in the summer but saw out the MLS season on loan before linking up with the Teessiders and coming to the rescue of Kim Hellberg, who has faced an injury crisis in the backline and was without five defenders. Left-back Alex Bangura was then forced off after just five minutes.

A quickly taken corner led to the first goal nine minutes after the break when Matt Targett put in Whittaker to slot beneath Gavin Bazunu. The second came seven minutes later when centre-half Luke Ayling found Silvera with a brilliant diagonal pass. There was still a lot of work to do but the Aussie winger's touch and finish was clinical (celebrating, above). Whittaker scored his second and Boro's third when he slotted home a cut-back from Aidan Morris. Substitute Browne rounded off the scoring 14 minutes from time.

Boro boss Hellberg said: "The players have been doing everything they can for the shirt. They're unbelievable to work with."

Saints manager Tonda Eckert was fuming and said: "The second half is nowhere near good enough. We need to become more resilient."

CHAMPIONSHIP

MATCH STATS

MIDDLESBROUGH		SAINTS
55%	POSSESSION	45%
5	SHOTS ON TARGET	4
9	SHOTS OFF TARGET	7
11	CORNERS	5
1	OFFSIDE	1
7	FOULS	12
0 0	CARDS	4 0

REF: Oliver Langford **ATT:** 26,077